

Prologue

The Ancient Prophecy of El

Weep not, Children of Light,

For though the Great Enchanter was deceived, he lies not in darkness;

And though the Red Dragon has fallen, he will return again.

Together they rest in the Realm of El.

And 400 years shall pass, and all will seem forgotten.

Truth will hide in Myth.

Great wars will rage between Elf, Wizard, and Man;

And the Dark will take half of Light's children.

For 1000 years, their magic bound in slavery,

They will forget the joy of freedom; they will forget the wisdom of Eldartha;

And their beauty will fade with their memories.

And Wizards will hide their faces from Man;

And Elves will no longer live among the forests of men;

And Man will forget when Magic covered the land.

Fear not, Children of El,

Though Darkness will rise in the Realm of Wizards.

For 10 years, hope will be lost.

Then a prophecy shall be given to bring them hope,

But the White Bee will hide it in secret,

Yet a servant of the Black Serpent shall hear it in part.

Then a child shall be born to unite the realms.

And he will be marked by the Dark, but the mark will be a sign of Light and Power.

And in this child, the Red Dragon and the Great Enchanter will return as one.

And his sword shall have a new name, for it will be touched by El.

Rejoice, Children of Light,

For the Child of Prophecy shall slay the Black Serpent;

He shall slay the one who flees from eternal sleep.

And he shall free our brothers; and all will once again be united.

Then Peace will reign as it did in the time of the Red Dragon and the Great Enchanter.

Seek not the Child of Prophecy in the Realm of Elves,

For he shall be born of a pure Wizard and a daughter of Man.

But when you have found him, teach him your ways,

For he will be hunted by the White Bee; and he will be hunted by the Black Serpent.

But neither shall find him until he draws his sword from the Realm of El.

And he will be a Prince among you.

You shall call his name "Touched by Light."

And his sword shall bear his name.

He shall call it

Sethrael.

Chapter 1

1 November 1981, 11:55 pm

Hidden among the branches of a large evergreen, he watched the long-bearded one place the baby on the doorstep. He waited until he was sure that the ancient wizard, the shape-shifter, and the half-giant were gone.

He dropped silently from the branch and cautiously crept across the well-kept lawn, keeping to the shadows, until he reached the child. The boy still slept. He reckoned Old Long Beard had placed an enchantment on the child; otherwise the thin blanket would not have kept him warm against the cold November wind.

As he reached down to take the baby, the child's eyes opened. Large, round emerald eyes, framed by thick black lashes, gazed up at him. There was no fear or confusion in those enormous green orbs, only curiosity.

He smiled reassuringly, and then took the boy in his arms. "Come, child," he whispered. "Your destiny does not lie here." Silently, he carried the baby into the shadows.

Surrey was a long walk from the nearest forest, but there were still a few hours until sunrise. It felt strange to walk in the open without trees for shelter, feeling hard roads of stone beneath his deerskin boots rather than the soft, moist soil of the forest. He wondered how non-magical beings could live in such ugly structures built so close together. He shook his head in sorrow at the limbless tree trunks with thick, black ropes connecting them as far as the eye could see. Some had odd-looking lights stuck near the top. Grass grew only in small squares in front of and behind the structures, though most of them had a tree within the square and strange plants and blossoms, which had been forced to grow in circles or rows. Many of the grassy areas were enclosed by wood, stone, or wire to prevent anyone from entering.

"It is good to be leaving this place," he said to the child in his arms. "You would not be happy here."

As first light began to dawn over the forest, two figures entered a small glade. One was tall and slender. He wore deerskin trousers, tunic, and boots. A quiver of arrows hung on his back; his bow rested across his shoulder. His skin was still bronzed from the past summer's sun. The large almond shaped eyes were silvery blue, and the brows, several shades darker than his hair, turned up slightly at the temples. His long pale hair shone almost white in the morning light. The sides had been pulled back and tied with a leather thong over the back, which had been left free and reached almost to his waist. But it was the small pointed ears that marked him as an elf.

In one arm, he carried a small human boy, little more than a year old. The child's hair was black, sticking out in all directions—green eyes, wide and curious, head turning right and left, trying to look everywhere at once. The young boy was dressed in blue cotton-wool one-piece pajamas that covered him from neck to toes. He was wrapped in a small green blanket bordered with blue rabbits and yellow ducklings.

The elf sat down beside a small stream and placed the child on his knee. He pulled a cup from a pouch on his belt and, filling it from the stream, gave the child some water to drink. "Our journey is almost over," he said softly. "And then we will have breakfast."

The boy finished drinking and spoke for the first time. "Where mummy?" he asked.

"Mummy and Daddy are in the Summerland," the elf answered. "You will be with me now."

"Mummy hurt?" he asked.

The elf gave the child a gentle smile. "No. Not anymore."

The boy looked thoughtful for a moment. "Pa'foot?"

"I don't know Pa'foot. Is that your friend?"

The boy nodded. "Pa'foot. Mooey," he said.

The elf supposed that Pa'foot and Mooey were toys or pets that had belonged to the child. "I'm not sure where Pa'foot and Mooey got off to," he said. "But I am sure they are quite safe."

This seemed to satisfy the child, and he took another drink from the cup.

After a few moments of rest, the elf stood, lifted the child, and walked back into the forest.

It was mid morning when they reached the bottom of a steep cliff at the side of a mountain. The elf placed his hand on the solid stone and spoke: "Kea Mithrael dina Lothair." An opening appeared in the stone, and the elf pushed it open. They stepped into a dark cave, and the stone immediately closed behind them.

One shaft of bright light shone from an opening at the top of the cave. The elf and child stood in its beam, unable to see anything beyond it. "I am Mithrael son of Lothair," the elf said. "I have returned from my quest."

Slowly, the shaft of light began to fade and sconces along the cave walls came to life. Their eyes adjusted quickly. Surrounding them were a number of elves with their bows drawn. All had the same pale hair and were dressed similarly to Mithrael. When they saw the new arrivals, they lowered their weapons. One, which seemed to be the leader, came forward. "Is this the Child of Prophecy?" he asked, nodding his head toward the boy.

"Yes," he answered.

"The Queen wishes to see you immediately. You may take the child and go."

Mithrael bowed slightly, and then grinned when he saw the boy in his arms bow also. The elves chuckled as he carried the child to the back wall of the cave. Again, he put his hand on the stone surface and spoke the same words he had earlier. And, again, an opening appeared. This time, they walked into a large valley, surrounded by forest. A spring ran through the land from the side of the mountain.

Despite it being the beginning of November, the weather was warm, the forest was green, and wildflowers grew everywhere. Unicorns, winged horses, hippogriffs, and other magical creatures roamed the lush green meadow, feeding on the foliage and drinking from the stream. The wildlife ignored the two as they made their way to the forest.

The boy's eyes were wide, filled with excitement as he spied the animals. He pointed to one and gasped, "Nu-horn!"

The elf smiled. "Yes, that is a Unicorn," he said. "You have seen one before?"

The child, not taking his eyes off the wonderful animal, nodded his head. "Me wide?" he asked.

"Not now," the elf said. "First we must see the Queen. Then we will eat. You may ride later, if the unicorn agrees."

Word had obviously reached the others that Mithrael had arrived with the Child of Prophecy. A crowd had gathered around Eldartha, the oldest tree in the forest. They watched as Mithrael carried the boy past them. The Queen, surrounded by the Elders, sat on a large stone in front of Eldartha. Mithrael went to her, stood the child down beside him, and took his hand. He bowed deeply, and then sank to one knee.

The elves smiled with amusement as they watched the boy do the same. However, the toddler was unable to balance himself on one knee and tumbled over. The Queen and the assembled crowd hid their chuckles, watching the boy get up and try again. After another fall, he sat down on one leg and extended the other in front of him balancing himself with one hand on the ground and the other on Mithrael's thigh.

The boy looked up at the elf beside him and grinned proudly. The elf grinned back and winked at him.

The Queen cleared her throat. "You may speak, Mithrael dina Lothair," she said.

“Your Majesty, I have returned from my quest. This child is—“

“Me Hawwy!” came a small, yet loud, voice beside him.

This time, the crowd could not hide their amusement. Light laughter rippled through the forest. The Queen stood and, smiling down at the young child, knelt down in front of him. “Well, Harry, would you like to sit with me?”

The boy looked at Mithrael for permission, then nodded to the Queen. She took his hand, and then sat on the stone, placing the boy on her lap. “You may rise, Mithrael dina Lothair.” The elf stood, but kept his head bowed.

“Harry,” the Queen said. “We are elves. Do you know what that means?”

Harry nodded and pointed to her ear. The Queen smiled. “Yes, our ears are different. How did you learn about elves?”

“Mummy weed,” he said.

“Your mummy read to you about elves?”

He nodded. “And Daddy.”

“You are a very clever boy,” she said.

Harry nodded his agreement. “Me wide nu-horn!” he said excitedly.

The Queen frowned in confusion. “Nu-horn?”

Mithrael bowed deeply. “If I may explain, Your Majesty?”

“Yes, please,” she said.

“Harry saw the unicorns in the valley and wishes to ride them.”

“Ah,” she said, finally understanding. “Unicorn. Yes, Harry, you may ride the unicorns if they agree.” She motioned to her daughter who stood among the crowd. When she approached, the Queen spoke to her softly, and the Princess nodded.

“Harry, would you like to go with Princess Elsbeth and have breakfast? Mithrael and I will join you in a moment.”

Harry nodded, slid down off the Queen’s lap, and took the hand of the beautiful Princess. “Bye-bye!” he said, waving to the Queen and the assembled crowd. Laughing, they all waved back, calling bye-bye to the little boy. Then he and the Princess entered the palace.

The Queen turned back to Mithrael with a fond smile. “It seems that human children are less reserved than Elven children,” she said.

Mithrael nodded. “He is quite talkative.”

“You are sure that he is the child?”

“I am, Your Majesty. The Dark Wizard marked him when he cast the green death curse. It hit the child’s forehead, marking him with the lightening bolt shaped scar over his right eye, then reflected back to the Dark Wizard.”

“The Dark Wizard has been destroyed?”

“I do not think so. The curse destroyed the body, but the soul lingered. It was very dark, ancient magic.”

“How did the child survive the curse?”

“Also ancient magic, but of the light. The father sacrificed himself to save his mate and son, and then the mother sacrificed herself for the child, fulfilling a blood magic ritual. She must have feared that the Dark Wizard would find the child and had prepared for it.”

“And the other child?”

“His home was undisturbed.”

The Queen nodded, then smiled. "Harry is a clever boy."

"He is," the elf said, smiling proudly. "He has lived only 15 moon cycles, yet he understands and communicates, though his use of words is very limited."

"Yes, but that will make it easier to teach him both languages. He must learn both Elven and English. You must teach him our ways, Mithrael, for the prophecy to be fulfilled."

"I will, Your Majesty."

The Queen rose and extended her hand to the younger elf. "Come, Mithrael. Let us have breakfast and we will talk of your coming nuptials and the solstice ceremony."

Chapter 2

The Elven realm did not exist within the bounds of the human world. A wizard would say that it was in a separate dimension. However, Elves did not use this word. For them, the passing from realm to realm was as simple as walking through a doorway. There were many realms, but the Elves only left their own to hunt in the forests of the human realm or to visit with those in the Realm of El.

There was no word for Death in the Elven tongue. Elves did not age the way humans did. They did not get old or sick. But, after living many, many years, they crossed into the Summerland in the Realm of El; and once there, they could not return. However, on the edge of that realm, there was a place where those in both worlds could meet and talk.

They could be injured or killed, however. Because of the healing abilities of the women, most elves survived their injuries. However, on the rare occasion that an elf was killed, the soul moved out of the body and into the Summerland. This was also the place where human souls went after death. In the English tongue, they called it Heaven. Humans, even Wizards, did not know how to travel between realms, and so, unlike the Elves, they had no way to communicate with those who had crossed over.

There was no word for Theft in the Elven tongue. They owned very little. Their only belongings were the clothes on their backs and another set stored in a cave for special occasions, their amulets—which were valuable only to the one who wore them, the tools they carried in pouches on their belts, and their weapons—which never left their sides. They slept under animal skins wrapped in their cloaks or animal furs, bathed in the river, and cooked on open fires. They ate fruits, nuts, wild vegetables, and meat. They drank goat's milk and water.

Meals were shared among the Elves. Food that had been gathered, or meat that had been dried after a hunt, was stored in a large cave. Animal skins and furs were also stored to be used for shelter and clothing. At night, each family took some from the caves and strung the skins between trees to protect them from the night rains and early

morning mists. Children were wrapped in furs and laid on beds of soft skins. After being dried in the sun and swept clean by those who had used them, they were returned to the cave the next morning.

During the day, women watched their young children, gathered food, prepared meals, and made clothing and amulets. Men and older boys hunted, made tools and weapons, and, when needed, dug for metals and gems from nearby caves for swords and amulets.

Every morning after breakfast, women, girls, and small children went to the river to bathe. Every evening before supper, the men and older boys did the same. Supper was a time for sharing gossip and hearing news. After supper, they were entertained with music or storytelling.

This was the world Harry Potter had come to live in.

Harry thoroughly enjoyed his first day in this new environment, until bedtime. That is when he began to miss his mother. Mithrael paced back and forth, holding the baby against him, trying to sooth him with his words. Nothing seemed to work. Finally, Mithrael began to sing a lullaby he had heard when he was a child.

He did not remember all the words, so he had to hum much of it, but his soft tenor voice soon soothed the young child, and before long he was asleep. Mithrael was determined to learn the words from Elsbeth tomorrow.

After breakfast the next morning, Elsbeth took Harry down to the river to bathe with the women and other children. The river was shallow, so he could stand in the water. He had a great deal of fun splashing the other children. But the others were not used to such behavior and hid behind their mothers. Harry tried to go after them, but Elsbeth stopped him by pointing out the animals on the bank that had come to watch the women and children bathe.

After the bath, the younger children were allowed to remain naked, drying themselves in the morning sun. They played together near where the women were working. Harry could not yet understand their language, but that did not stop him from joining them in their games.

Now that he was not splashing them with water, the other children accepted him.

Princess Elsbeth, Queen Thespa, and some of the other women worked diligently to make Harry some nappies, a small tunic, a pair of trousers, a pair of soft deerskin shoes, and a dark forest-green cloak. The trousers would only be worn during cool weather. Nappies, made of soft animal skin, which were waterproof, would be worn under the tunic. They had two leather drawstrings, which could be tied at the sides. Wet and dirty nappies would be washed in the river throughout the day and hung on branches to dry in the sun.

Harry adjusted quickly to his new life, until it was time to sleep. At night, he wanted his room, his bed, and his mummy. Sleeping outside on the ground was not a concept he could grasp, and that is when he remembered that he should be at home with his parents. He missed Mummy and Daddy; he missed Uncle Sirius and Uncle Remus. He missed Prongs, his stag plushy that he slept with at night. He missed the way Mummy read to him, then rocked him and sang to him. He missed the one bottle he was still allowed to drink at night before going to bed, even though Mummy said he was too big for it. He missed the way Daddy tossed him up in the air, then caught him and blew kisses on his belly.

And then Mithrael would cuddle him close and sing while he paced back and forth, and Harry would fall asleep. Sometimes, during the night, he would wake up screaming from a nightmare.

One such nightmare occurred on the night of the full moon.

"What is it, little one?" Mithrael asked, picking him up and cuddling him close.

"Mon'ter!" Harry sobbed. "Mon'ter hurt Mummy!"

"There are no monsters here, Harry," Mithrael said. "No monsters can come into our world." Mithrael waved his hand over the boy's head and whispered, "Forget, my son. Forget and sleep," and Harry forgot about the monster. He forgot what happened the night he lost his parents. And it would be a long time before he remembered it again.

The next morning, after his bath, Mithrael dressed him in his tunic, trousers, and boots.

"We are going hunting today, Harry. Would you like that?"

Harry nodded. "Hunt wabbit?" he asked. Mithrael had brought home rabbits the night before, and they had eaten them for supper.

"No, today we are going to hunt something bigger than a rabbit," he said, slipping the cloak around Harry's shoulders and tying it at the throat. "We are going to the human realm, and it is cold there, so you have to wear your hood up," he said, pulling the hood over Harry's head.

"Are you ready?" he asked, putting on his own cloak and picking up his bow.

Harry nodded, and Mithrael picked the child up in his arms and carried him to the portal.

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Remus Lupin awoke in the woods behind his cottage the morning after the full moon cold, naked, and sore. It had been a rough night. For the first time in many years, the wolf had wandered the forest alone. James and Peter were dead; Sirius was in Azkaban. He was the last Marauder.

He opened his eyes, and then jumped in surprise. An elf stood over him, holding out his robes. Slowly, Remus sat up and took the garment. Elves were dangerous creatures, so his eyes did not move from the figure as he slipped on his clothes. When he was dressed, the elf let out a shrill whistle and a little giggling ball of energy ran out from behind a tree and threw himself in Remus's arms.

"Unca Mooey!"

"Harry?" Remus wrapped his arms around the boy and held him tightly. "Oh, Harry," he whispered. "Oh, God, it's good to see you!" He

held the boy out for a moment to take a better look. The child was dressed just like the elf. "Where have you been?" he asked.

The boy pointed to the elf. "Wif Miffel."

"Miffel?"

The elf laughed. "I am Mithrael son of Lothair. Come. I will help you to your house."

Harry climbed off Remus's lap, and Mithrael leaned down, placed one of Remus's arms across his shoulders, and pulled him up.

"Me help!" Harry said, taking Remus's other arm and trying to put it over his own shoulder. The boy was too short for the man's arm to reach. Laughing, Remus gently placed a hand on top of his head.

"Thank you, Harry. This will help me keep my balance."

Once in the house, Remus sat on the couch and Mithrael went to get a bowl of water from the kitchen. Harry sat beside Remus and Mithrael sat on the coffee table in front of them. He took a pouch from his belt, which was full of herbs, and bathed Remus's wounds, then placed the herbs on top of them, and wrapped them with gauze. "This will help you heal faster," he said. "Do you have potions I can get for you?"

"Yes, I left them on the table in the kitchen," he said. Mithrael went to retrieve the potions, and Remus looked down at Harry and noticed the scar on his forehead. He gently brushed the child's hair away from it for a better look.

"It was the green death curse," the elf said, returning to the room and giving the potions to Remus. "It struck Harry's forehead, then rebounded and struck the Dark Wizard."

"You were there?" Remus asked, surprised.

"I was not in the house, but from the woods I saw it in my mind," he answered. "We had been watching both houses. We did not know which one he would choose."

"Both houses?" Remus asked, confused.

"Yes. The Potter House and the Longbottom House. Either boy could have been the child of the prophecy, but we did not know which until the Dark Wizard marked this one."

Remus frowned. "There was a prophecy?"

"Two," Mithrael answered. "One in your world and one in mine. The Long Bearded Wizard heard one prophecy. It was overheard by one of the Dark Wizard's followers. That is why both families were in hiding. Only those in my world know of the other prophecy."

"Do you know the prophecy that Albus heard?"

"Yes. Shall I tell you?"

Remus nodded.

"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Wizard approaches. Born as the 7th month dies; born to parents who have thrice defied him. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power that the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hands of the other, for neither can live while the other survives. The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the 7th month dies."

Remus paled and looked down at the boy who had fallen asleep beside him. "Oh, Harry," he whispered, running his fingers through the child's dark hair. He looked up at Mithrael. "And the other?"

Mithrael smiled. "I cannot tell a non-elf the other prophecy. However, I can assure you that it is a much happier one. It deals with a great work that Harry will do after he permanently vanquishes the Dark

Wizard. However, I have now told you too much, and I ask that you not reveal it to others. I spoke to relieve you of your worry.”

Remus smiled, relieved. “You have my word,” he said.

“You may, however, tell your friend, Sirius Black.”

Remus frowned. “He’s in Azkaban.”

The elf looked surprised. “Why?”

“Because he betrayed James and Lily. He was their secret keeper. And he killed Peter and 13 other people.”

Mithrael shook his head. “You are wrong. Sirius Black did not betray his friends. Peter Pettigrew betrayed them.”

Chapter 3

Remus felt the blood drain from his face. "That's not possible," he whispered.

"Peter Pettigrew had the mark of the Dark Wizard," Mithrael said. "He was the one who held the secret. Sirius Black was—" He frowned. "I do not know the word in your language. He made others believe that he held the secret so that the Dark Wizard would not try to capture Peter Pettigrew."

"Decoy," Remus said, looking at him with hope-filled eyes. "Sirius was a decoy. Then, he killed Peter because—"

"No. Peter is not dead. My people followed him through the forest to the place he hides. He lives as a rat in the crooked house that belongs to the large family with red hair--the Weasley House. They believe him to be a pet. We did not know that Sirius Black had been accused and taken to Azkaban. I know nothing of the 13 people who were killed."

"How do you know all this?"

"We have been waiting and watching for the Child of Prophecy for a very long time. We see and hear things that Wizards do not. We have different magic."

Remus nodded. He knew that elves used mind magic, but he had not studied it in detail. "I have to let Albus know. We've got to get Sirius out of Azkaban."

The elf nodded.

"What about Harry?" Remus asked. "Why is he with the elves?"

"Old Long Beard placed him on a doorstep in a non-magical village. It was the house of his mother's sister. If he had been left there, he would not be prepared to defeat the Dark Wizard or to perform the work that he will do after. He must learn both Elven and Wizard magic to succeed. We will keep him safe, and when the time comes, we will

send him to Long Beard's school. Long Beard makes too many mistakes. The people he left him with are hard and jealous and cruel. There is no room in their hearts for Harry. The Witch who is a shape-shifter watched the house the entire day and learned of their temperaments. She advised Long Beard not to leave the child there, but he did not listen."

"I can't believe he would do such a thing," Remus said angrily. "He knew that Lily did not want her son left with those people."

"He made the same mistake when the Dark Wizard was a boy. If he had found a home for Tom Riddle, instead of keeping him in the non-magical world where he was treated badly, the boy would not have become evil."

Remus looked thoughtful. "Your people do not trust Albus?"

"He is a good man. He tries to do what is right, but his priorities are for the Wizarding world, not the individual. He would feel sorrow to see the boy abused, but if he thought it would help him defeat the Dark Wizard, he would allow it. He has made many such mistakes. If he can help you get Sirius Black out of Azkaban, then allow him to do so. But do not trust him with the well being of the child. He must not know where the boy is until time for him to re-enter your world—or that you have seen him."

Remus nodded. "Will I be able to see him again?"

"Yes. There is a tree in the forest behind your house. There is a knot between two branches, which can be removed. You may leave a message inside the knot, and we will come to you whenever you desire. We will also leave messages there for you. I will mark the tree with an arrow when we leave so you will know which one it is."

"Thank you."

"On the winter solstice, there will be a ceremony, which will make Harry an adopted elf and my adopted son. I will also receive a mate at that ceremony. I would like for you and Sirius Black to attend, if it is possible, so that we can make you his guardians so that when Harry

goes back to your world, you will be responsible for him instead of Long Beard. If Sirius Black is not yet out of Azkaban, then I would like for you to come on your own.”

“Sirius is already his godfather in the Wizarding world, but as a werewolf, the law doesn’t allow me to be his guardian.”

“Long Beard did not care that Sirius Black was his godfather. He refused to give him the child, and then took the baby to the non-magical world. If you are godfathers by our laws, he will not be able to override our authority without causing a conflict between our races, which he will not want to do. Your Ministry of Magic has written that the laws of wizards must take into account the laws of other magical peoples. If you are his godfather in our world, your Ministry of Magic must accept this law in your world.”

Remus grinned. “You’re right. That is a ministry law.” He laughed heartily, waking up the boy who had been sleeping with his head on his lap. “Well, hello, Harry. Would you two like some lunch?”

At lunch, Harry regaled the other two with stories of the beautiful Princess Elsbeth. Remus teased Mithrael that he might have competition for his future bride, and the elf laughingly agreed.

When the boy finally calmed down enough to eat his lunch, Mithrael asked, “Do all human children communicate so well at this age?”

“Oh, no. Harry is very advanced,” he assured him. “He began to walk at 8 months old and talk at 10 months. James used to say that he started talking at 10 months and hasn’t stopped since.”

The elf laughed. “I am inclined to agree with him. So, do you think it is possible that Sirius Black will be released by the winter solstice?”

“I’m not sure,” Remus said thoughtfully. “It’s over a month away, so it’s possible. I’ll contact Albus tonight and we will begin the steps to have him released. I suppose it would help if we caught Pettigrew first.”

“I am sure it would. Is there anyone, in addition to Long Beard, who might help you?”

“Yes, there are a couple of aurors that I’m sure would help. In fact, I’ll contact them first. It might help keep Albus honest. By the way, why do you call him Long Beard?”

The elf grinned. “It is a story told among my people. Many years ago, an elf saw him standing under a tree with his beard stuck in a branch over his head. He had been sitting on the branch, and when he jumped down, his beard was caught, so he came down, but the end of his beard did not. Fortunately, his beard was very long and the branch was not so high that he could not place his feet on the ground. The half-giant Hagrid was laughing too hard to help. Of course, he was able to use magic to retrieve his beard, but we have called him Old Long Beard ever since.”

Remus laughed. “I wish I could have seen that.”

“As do I. I am sure it was a sight to remember. The one who told the story said that he was laughing so hard, he was surprised that Old Long Beard did not hear him.”

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Over the next month, Harry and Mithrael kept in contact with Remus. Two days after their visit, Aurors Moody and Shacklebolt went to the Burrow and caught Pettigrew. Two days after that, Sirius was released from Azkaban. Harry visited them often throughout the month at Remus’s cottage. Everything was explained to Sirius, and he agreed to allow the elves to raise and train Harry to prepare him for his fate, so long as they allowed him to be an important part of his godson’s life. No one knew of Harry’s whereabouts. Remus and Sirius kept the secret to themselves.

On the night of the winter solstice, the Elven realm was full of activity. Every elf of the realm, save for those who were on guard that night, were present, dressed in finest gossamer silks. At midnight, those assembled quietly moved to either side of the cove, leaving an open pathway to Eldartha.

All ceremonies were held beneath the branches of Eldartha, for it was from her that they received the blessing of her ancient wisdom. When an important decision was to be made, the Queen and Elders sat under her branches and listened for her words of wisdom in their hearts.

Two guards, uniformed in white and gold, walked down the path, each carrying a large spear. They advanced in front of the ancient tree, bowed to her in respect, and then stood on either side. Queen Thespa and Lord Kathair entered, and all those assembled bowed while they made their way to Eldartha.

Elder Kindarth, who would perform the ceremony, followed the Queen and her mate to the tree.

Lord Mithrael, with Princess Elsbeth on his arm, appeared. As the crowd bowed again, they slowly walked up the path and stood before the Queen, facing her. Harry appeared next, dressed in white and gold, like the guards and Mithrael. With a wide grin, he walked slowly up the path, just as they had practiced. Yet, he couldn't avoid the temptation to wave to all the people who were watching. Biting back a smile, the Queen cleared her throat, and Harry stopped waving. He continued up the path in a more sedate manner. His two godfathers, Sirius and Remus, who were also dressed in white and gold, followed Harry. However, instead of tunic and trousers, they wore Wizarding robes, since they were to be his guardians in that world.

Beneath Eldartha, Harry stood between his two godfathers, behind Mithrael and Elsbeth. The marriage ceremony would take place first, then the adoption. He waited patiently, or as patiently as a toddler can wait, for the first part to be over so that he could do his part. He had been nervous all day because Mithrael told him that he would have to give him a small cut on the finger to get some of his blood. Although he had promised that it wouldn't hurt, Harry was still nervous that it might sting just a little, and he didn't want to cry in front of all these people. He wanted to be brave like his new father.

Several times, Remus and Sirius placed their hands on his shoulders, a silent message for him to stop fidgeting. Finally, after 10 minutes, the boy slumped, let out a huge sigh, and lay down on the ground. That act was accompanied by a few snorts and giggles. Sirius bent down, brushed off his clothes, picked the boy up in his arms, and let him rest his head on his godfather's shoulder for the rest of the ceremony. By the time it was finished, Harry was asleep.

They had to wake him for the adoption ceremony. As he blinked his tired eyes, he asked loudly, "We mawwied now?"

The entire assembly, who had been trying to hold in their chuckles for the past half hour, finally released their mirth, laughing at the tired young boy's antics.

"Yes," Mithrael said, taking him from Sirius. "We are married. Now, it is time to have a child."

Since Harry was actually taking part in this portion of the ceremony, he was more attentive. After the blood was taken, he looked down at his finger in surprise, and then whispered up to Mithrael. "Not hurt!" Of course, a little boy's whispers are about as quiet as a hippogriff's screech, so there was more laughter.

Harry's blood was mixed with Mithrael's and Elzbeth's, and then placed on each of their foreheads by Elder Kindarth, where it was absorbed magically. From the mingled blood, each one received the most prominent power possessed by the other two. In Harry's case, he received Mithrael's skill with a sword and his sharp eyesight, avoiding the myopia, which had plagued his father. From Elsbeth, he received her ability to heal and perform mind magic. Both his new parents received, from him, a magical core and his ability to do wandless magic.

And then Harry received a new name.

"From this day forward, in the Elven realm, you will be known as Prince Sethrael dina Mithrael," the Queen told him. "This is your Elven name. Sethrael means 'touched by Light.' In this world, Lord Mithrael dina Lothair and the Princess Elsbeth will be your father and

mother. In the Wizarding world, you will be known as Harry James Potter, and your godfathers, Sirius Orion Black and Remus John Lupin, will be your legal guardians. Are there any in this assembly who object to this? If so, speak now.”

Fortunately, no one objected, so Harry, also known as Sethrael, was taken to their camp and tucked into his furs.

Chapter 4
Summer, 1985

“Sethrael!” Mithrael called for the third time. He was beginning to get angry. He knew that his son could hear him, but he could not understand why he would not answer.

“Se—“ His words were cut short by the sharp sting of a stone hitting his thigh. He turned quickly, just in time to see his son hide behind a tree.

Mithrael ran to his son’s hiding place, and before the boy could flee, grabbed the back of his tunic.

Five-year-old Sethrael looked up into his father’s angry face and realized that he was in trouble. He tried to hide the sling behind his back, but Mithrael had already seen it. He turned the boy around, took the sling out of his hand, and placed it in his own belt.

“What have I taught you about aiming the sling at other people?” he asked angrily.

Sethrael swallowed nervously. “You said not to do it because someone could be injured.”

“Then why did you do it? Did you wish to injure me?”

The boy looked down at the ground and shook his head.

“Look at me,” his father said.

Sethrael looked back up at his father.

“You will not get this back until you have proven that you can be trusted with it.”

Sethrael nodded.

“What did I tell you would happen if you did this again?”

Again, he swallowed. "I would be punished."

"And so you shall. You will do women's work today," he said. "And tomorrow morning, you will go to Elder Kasha and ask him to teach you the Lesson of Nathda."

Sethrael looked at his father in horror. "Daka, please! Don't make me go to Elder Kasha!"

"You must learn to use your weapons wisely, Seth. If I cannot trust you with a sling, do you think I could trust you with a bow and arrows? You will not be allowed to use your weapons until you have learned this lesson. Now, go help your Methara."

Being sent to do women's work was not a punishment because it was beneath him. All work was equally important, and both genders were equal in the Elven realm. In fact, the Elders consisted of both men and women, but only a woman could rule in their world. There was no King, only a Queen. To be sent to do the work of the opposite gender meant that you had failed to do the work of your own. Girls were often sent to do men's work as punishment for not performing their own tasks with care.

With a heavy sigh, Sethrael went to find his mother. He had never been to Elder Kasha for lessons before, but he had heard stories from the boys who had. One had told him that the elder had threatened to cut off his ears because he did not use them to listen. Another almost lost his tongue for lying. He wondered what Elder Kasha would cut off him for having struck his father with a rock.

As he got closer to where his mother was working, he slowed down, trying to look innocent. "Aya, Metha," he greeted his mother. "Do you need any help today?"

His mother looked up at him. "What are you being punished for?"

He shrugged. "Who said I was being punished?"

She tried to hide her smile. "You do not help me unless your Dakara is punishing you."

"I help you make healing potions," he said defensively.

"That is because you like potions. Now, why is your Dakara punishing you?"

He sighed. "I sort of accidentally shot him with my sling."

She raised an eyebrow. "Accidentally?"

"Sort of," he mumbled, looking at the ground.

She shook her head. "I hope he took it away from you."

He sighed again and dropped to the ground beside her. "He did. He said I couldn't have it back until I proved I could be trusted with it. And I have to go see Elder Kasha tomorrow."

"We need water from the spring," she said. "Bring back two holders."

He knew he would have to do the heavy stuff. He got the leather water holders and went to the spring.

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As he lay wrapped in his furs that night, he overheard his parents talking.

"Lie still, Mithrael, and let me put this on the bruise."

"I do not need it, Elsbeth. I am fine."

"You are not fine," she said, and then laughed. "Stop that! I am trying to heal you! Now lie still and let me concentrate."

After a moment, his mother spoke in a more serious tone. "Why are you sending Sethrael to Elder Kasha tomorrow?"

His father sighed. "Because he must learn to be responsible with his weapons."

“But this punishment is too severe, Mithrael.”

“Elsbeth, if he were to injure another Elf, the punishment would be even worse.”

“I do not like that Dakaras send their sons to learn these lessons from Elder Kasha. It seems very cruel to me.”

“And, yet, he will learn his lesson. That is what matters.”

The next morning after breakfast, Sethrael found Elder Kasha beneath the branches of Eldartha, sharpening a large knife on a smooth stone.

Sethrael bowed low and waited to be acknowledged.

“Why have you come to me?” the Elder asked.

“My Dakara sent me to ask you to teach me the Lesson of Nathda,” he replied nervously. And though his head was still bowed, his eyes were fixed upon the sharp knife in the elder’s hand.

“Sit,” he said, pointing to a spot in front of him. Sethrael sat cross-legged on the ground and watched as Elder Kasha raised the knife to examine it. It glistened in the sun as he twisted it back and forth, and then tested its edge with his finger.

“Nathda was a boy who had reached the age of 5 full seasons.” He looked at Sethrael. “About your age, I think.”

Sethrael swallowed nervously.

“He had learned to use a sling, and his Dakara had taught him well. Nathda could hit almost anything he aimed at, no matter how fast it was moving. All the people would watch him with wonder and say, ‘He will be a great hunter some day.’

“But Nathda had one very bad habit. He did not listen when his Dakara told him never to aim the sling at another person. Over and

over, his Dakara tried to teach him this lesson, but Nathda did not listen. And then one day, Nathda hit a small child with a stone from his sling. The child was little more than a baby, and the injury was bad. The child crossed over into the Summerland.”

Sethrael gasped. No one that young should cross into the Summerland.

“And so the Elders got together to decide what must be done about Nathda. It was too dangerous to allow him to use a weapon. But what can a boy do if he cannot hunt? And, so, the Elders knew that there was only one solution: they would have to make Nathda a girl.”

Sethrael felt the blood drain from his face.

“Do you know how hard it is to turn a boy into a girl?” the Elder asked irritably, as if the difficulty were Sethrael’s fault.

Sethrael, his eyes wide with fear, shook his head.

“Do you know the difference between girls and boys?”

Sethrael nodded.

“Then you should know that, to make Nathda a girl, he had to have his bits removed.”

The boy gasped and covered his own bits protectively with both hands.

“I was the one to perform the removal. I used this very knife,” he said, holding it out to show to Sethrael.

By this time, the boy was shaking with fear. He leaned away from the knife as it came toward him.

“Of course, he bled quite a bit. The healers had to use lots of medicines that burned until he was healed. Then, of course, we had to dress him like a girl and give him a new name. After that, he learned to do women’s work very well, but he was never allowed to

hunt or touch a weapon again.” He paused for a moment, giving his knife a little more attention. “Now, what was it exactly that you did to cause your Dakara to send you here?”

His mouth was so dry he could barely speak. “I-I-I a-accidentally shot my Dakara with a stone from my s-s-sling,” he said.

“Accidentally, eh?”

Sethrael nodded.

“You know, I’ve cut off the tongue of a boy for lying.”

“I-It was not an accident,” Sethrael corrected quickly. “I-I did not think. I aimed it at his leg. I did not want to hurt him. I know better now. I will never do it again. Please, Elder Kasha! Do not make me a girl!”

The Elder looked at the panicked boy carefully. “I think you have learned your lesson, so I do not suppose I will have to make you a girl today. But next time, I will not go so easy on you.”

“There will not be a next time. I swear it. I have learned my lesson, Elder Kasha.”

“Very well, then, I suppose you can tell your Dakara that you have learned the Lesson of Nathda. Go, then. He will be pleased to know that you are still a boy.”

Sethrael got up and bowed low before the elder. “Thank you, Elder Kasha,” he said, then ran as fast as he could to where his Dakara was waiting for him.

“Daka! Daka! I learned my lesson. I will never aim my sling at anyone again. I swear it.”

“You have been to Elder Kasha?” he asked.

“Yes, Daka, and I am still a boy. He gave me a second chance.”

Mithrael nodded. He took the sling out of his belt. "Can you be trusted with this now?"

"Yes, Daka. You can trust me."

His father handed him the sling. "I hope I will not have to send you back to Elder Kasha."

"No, Daka, you will not. Not ever. I swear it."

"If you aim even near someone—"

"No, Daka. I will be careful. I will not even aim in the direction where someone is standing. Not even close. I swear it."

"All right, then. Go and practice, and when I call you, answer me the first time."

"Yes, Daka. Thank you, Daka." He gave his Dakara a hug and ran off to practice his shooting.

When he was out of sight, Mithrael looked over to where Elder Kasha was sitting. The Elder was grinning at him. Mithrael grinned back, nodded his head in thanks, and went to watch his son practice the sling.

Chapter 5

Summer 1988

The smooth stone sailed from Sethrael's sling and struck the back of the rabbit's head.

"I did it, Daka!" he said excitedly. "I killed my first rabbit!"

"It is not dead, Seth. Only stunned," Mithrael said, kneeling beside the rabbit. "You must finish the task quickly so that he will not suffer."

Sethrael took a knife from his belt, knelt beside the rabbit, and slit its throat. "Thank you, little brother, for the food and fur you will provide for my people. Go, now! Be free and happy in the Summerland."

Mithrael smiled and nodded his approval. "You did well, my son. I am proud of you."

Sethrael grinned at his father. "Metha will be proud, too. She will know I am a hunter now, Daka. "

His father laughed. "Yes, she will." He dipped his forefinger in the animal's blood and made a triangular sign on his son's forehead. "But do not expect her to stop treating you like her little chick. She likes to keep you under her wing."

"Metha must understand that I am a man, now," he said with quiet conviction. "I will make her a pair of fine mittens from the skin to keep her hands warm when she travels to the Human Realm. Then she will remember that I have made my first kill, and you have given me the mark of a hunter. She will see me sit with the other hunters at the fire and hear their stories. She will hear me tell my own stories to the people."

"Yes, you have earned that right. However, you must remember that you are the youngest among all hunters. All the others have lived more than 12 full seasons, and you have lived only 8. You must show them the proper respect and wait to be called upon to speak. And when you speak, Sethrael, do not boast."

“I will not boast, Daka,” he said solemnly. “I will be very humble.”

With some difficulty, Mithrael kept the smile from his lips, but still it sparkled in his eyes. His son was not vain or boastful, but when recalling an adventure, his excitement often led to fanciful exaggerations. Mithrael believed that the boy's godfather, Sirius Black, was responsible for this, for his stories were told much the same way.

Sethrael picked the rabbit up by its hind legs and walked beside his father, who was carrying two others. It was time to go home.

“Be patient with your Methara, Seth.”

“I will, Daka.”

That evening, when he bathed with the other men at the river, Sethrael was careful not to wash the triangle of dried blood from his forehead. Tonight he would be celebrated as a hunter, and Mithrael had told him to wait until after the ceremony to wash it off.

Sethrael didn't want to wash it off, even after the ceremony. He wondered how long it would stay if he didn't wash anything above his neck for the next few days or weeks or months.

His Dakara had heard his thoughts. “It will come off tonight while you are sleeping, Seth,” he said. “The warmth of the furs will make your face damp, and it will be rubbed off on the skins. But your Methara will not allow you to lie in your furs until you have washed your face,” he added with a grin.

Sethrael sighed. “Women!” he thought, rolling his eyes, then quickly looked at his Dakara whose eyebrow was raised in warning. He immediately let his thoughts drift to other subjects. Had he shown such disrespect for his Methara by saying that out loud, his Dakara would have been angry. He finished bathing, and then got dressed hurriedly so he could get to supper and start the celebration as soon as possible.

When he entered the cove with Mithrael, he found his godfathers waiting for him. He rushed into Remus's arms. "Uncle Remus! How did you get here?"

"Your mother brought us," he said. "Congratulations, Harry. I hear that there's something special to celebrate tonight."

Laughing, Harry moved into Sirius's arms and gave him a hug. "I am a hunter now," he said. "I killed a rabbit for supper!"

"Wow!" said Sirius. "How did you do it?"

"I will get to tell the story to everyone later," he said. "You must wait for it."

Sirius grinned and looked at Mithrael pointedly. The elf shook his head, smiling. He knew that Harry's story would be greatly exaggerated before the people tonight, and Sirius knew it, too. His suspicions had been proven. Sirius was the rascal who had taught his son the art of storytelling.

"Which one is mine?" Harry asked his mother as he examined the roasting rabbits, which were on spits over the fire.

"Sethrael!" she whispered in embarrassment. "The rabbits belong to everyone. You hunt for the people, not for recognition. Do not shame your Dakara tonight by being boastful."

Sethrael hung his head. "I am sorry, Metha," he said. "I did not mean to boast. I was just excited about my first hunt."

She wrapped her arms around him. "I know, my son. I know." Then she pointed to one of the rabbits on the spit. "That is the one you caught. The skin is drying separately from the others so that you can have it when it is ready."

"Thank you, Metha. I have something special I want to do with it. I want to make a present for you."

His mother smiled and hugged him once more, then turned her attention back to the meal. Sethrael went to sit with his father and Uncle Remus.

Sirius had transformed into Padfoot and was playing with the other children. Three of the smaller ones were on his back, riding him, as he slowly pranced around the cove. Sethrael watched enviously, wishing that he could join them. But he was a man now and would have to sit with the other hunters to wait for supper.

His Dakara put an arm around his shoulders and leaned toward him. "It is all right for you to join them," he said. "Even hunters must spend time with their friends. It will not make you any less a man to play games with them."

He looked up at Mithrael for reassurance, and when his Dakara smiled and nodded, he jumped up and ran to join the others.

"It seems as if it were only yesterday when I brought him to this realm," Mithrael said softly.

"I know," Remus agreed. "He's still awfully young to be a hunter. The other boys look much older."

"They are. Most do not become hunters until they have reached 12. Only two have ever made it before that, and the youngest was 10. He is the youngest to ever be made a hunter."

"He's always done things early, hasn't he?" Remus asked.

Mithrael nodded. "Before Seth, I had noticed that Elven children advanced faster than humans, but I believed it was because elves had more responsibilities at a younger age. Seth, however, has done everything before of his peers. He is the first to understand a lesson. He was reading by the time he reached 4. He knew the name of every kind of tree and plant in the forest. He knew which were poison and the healing properties of the others. At age 2, the unicorns would come to him and allow him to ride whenever he desired. By age 5, he was flying on backs of hippogriffs. Elsbeth was beside herself, afraid he would be injured."

"It still frightens me when he scampers up a tree like he belongs there," Remus said. "He goes to the highest branch that will hold his weight, then sit there all day, talking to the birds. I once asked him what he was talking to them about, and he told me he was asking them to teach him how to fly."

"Have you heard him talk to snakes?" Mithrael asked.

Remus shook his head.

"He speaks to them in their own language and understands theirs."

Remus paled. "Harry's a parselmouth?"

Mithrael nodded. "That is unheard of in our world. We can feel the emotions of animals and can hear the magical ones speak in our heads, but no elf has ever spoken the language of snakes."

"Few wizards have that ability, also. Slytherin and Voldemort spoke parseltongue. It has been said that Slytherin's children were able to do it, also, but I don't know that for sure."

"Wizards believe it to be an evil gift, do they not?"

"Well, yes, but only because it is rare; and the ones who have had the ability were men who were evil. I don't think that the actual ability is a sign of an evil wizard, but many wizards and witches do. It may be something he wants to keep hidden."

Mithrael looked at Remus and smiled. "Sethrael will cause them to change their minds about this gift. He is not one to keep his abilities a secret."

Remus chuckled. "No, he isn't."

After supper, the fires were lit in the cove and the men sat down in a circle. Sethrael sat beside his father. The women and children formed an outer circle around the men. Even the queen joined the outer circle, for this was a night for the hunters.

When everyone was seated, Mithrael stood and walked to the middle of the circle. "Today is a good day," he said. "My son has become a man. He made his first kill and brought food and skins for our people. I have marked him with the sign of the hunter. Sethrael, my son, stand inside the circle."

Sethrael stood up and walked to his father. His father reached behind him and took the bow from his back. "This is the bow I made on the first day I brought you to our realm. I made it in preparation for this day. And now I am proud to give it to you, my son." He gave Seth the bow, then sat down to join the other men.

"Thank you, Dakara," Sethrael said, overwhelmed with emotion.

"My son," Elsbeth said, entering the circle carrying a quiver. "This is the quiver I made for you when you became my son. I worked on it for many days. Your Dakara brought me precious stones the color of your eyes, which I placed on the quiver for you. Use it well, my son. I am proud of you." She gave Seth the quiver, and then went to join the other women.

Elder Kasha stood and walked into the circle. "You have learned your lessons well, Sethrael son of Mithrael. I have watched you grow and become a man. Use the bow responsibly and wear the quiver with pride." He took the quiver from Seth's hands and strapped it to his back, then took an arrow from his own quiver and placed it in Sethrael's. "I am proud to give you this arrow."

When Elder Kasha had joined the other men, each hunter stood and placed one of their own arrows in Seth's quiver. His grandfather, Lord Kathair, gave the final arrow to him. "Sethrael son of Mithrael, my grandson, I am proud of you today. All the hunters have given you one of their own arrows so that you will remember that it is all the people for whom you hunt. It is also to acknowledge that you are one of us, now. You are a hunter and a man. Until today, your Dakara was the youngest to have ever become a hunter. He had reached only 10 seasons when he stood in the circle as you do today. I know that he is pleased that the one who takes his place as the youngest hunter is his own son."

Sethrael looked at his father in surprise. His father was smiling proudly, nodding at him.

“Thank you, Eldakara,” Sethrael said to his grandfather, finding it difficult to keep his emotions at bay, then turned to the other men in the circle. “Thank you all.” He bowed very low and his grandfather returned to sit with the men.

Sethrael was overcome with emotion, but he refused to allow it to show. When he straightened, he took a deep breath. “I know that it is customary for a new hunter to tell the story of his first hunt. But I do not feel worthy to stand before you and speak, so I ask my Dakara to tell the story for me.”

He waited for his father to come forward, but Mithrael did not rise. “My son, you have proven your worth today. It is for you to tell your story, and it is with a Dakara’s pride that I hear my son speak of his first hunt.”

Sethrael took another deep breath and began his tale. At the beginning of his story, he spoke modestly of his deeds, but as he progressed, he became more and more excited and began to act out the parts of the rabbit, his father, and himself. Before the story was completed, it was completely unrecognizable from the actual hunt, but his listeners were thoroughly entertained. They laughed, wiping tears of mirth from their faces, very pleased that Mithrael had persuaded his son to tell his own story. It was a tale that would be remembered for many years to come.

Chapter 6
31 July 1990

Sethrael lay on his stomach in the undergrowth of the forest trying to explain to Esha, a small green snake, what a birthday was.

“And when the full cycle of the seasons comes again, everyone celebrates the day you were born.”

“But how do you remember what day you were born? You were very small.”

Sethrael laughed. “I do not remember the day, but others tell me of it. And my godfathers come and bring me presents and cake, and they sing a silly song, and I blow out the candles and eat the cake.”

“Why do you blow them out? Do you eat in the dark?”

“No, they are small candles, one for every full season of my life. I make a wish, and then I blow out the candles. If I blow them all out in one breath, my wish comes true.”

“What do you wish for?”

“If I tell my wish, it will not come true. That is what my godfathers tell me, and they are Wizards, so they know all about it.”

“Sethrael!” his father called.

“I am here, Daka!” he said, standing. “I will speak with you tomorrow, Esha. I must go now.”

“You were talking to the snake again?” his father asked.

“Yes, Daka. Her name is Esha. She did not understand about birthdays.”

“Your godfathers have arrived. They are waiting for you by the portal.”

Sethrael frowned. "Am I to go there? I thought we were having my celebration here."

"We are, but I have a surprise for you and your godfathers first."

He followed his father to one of the trees that was a portal to the other realm where his godfathers were waiting for them. When he saw them, he ran to them and gave each one a hug.

"Happy Birthday, Harry!" they both said together.

"How old are you today?" Sirius asked, pretending he didn't know.

"I have lived 10 full seasons," Sethrael said proudly.

Sirius gently yanked the long braid that his mother had plaited for him that morning. "So, you're practically an old man now, aren't you?"

"Not quite yet, Uncle Sirius. I am still a young man."

"Harry," Remus said. "Next year, when you are at Hogwarts, and someone asks you how old you are, you will have to tell them in years rather than seasons or they won't understand."

Sethrael nodded. "I will try to remember that, Uncle Remus. Did you bring me a cake this year?"

"We certainly did," Sirius said. "Elsbeth is keeping it safe for us while we see what your father has in store for us."

"It's a surprise!" Sethrael said. "I don't even know what it is."

Mithrael laughed. "Then follow me and you will soon find out." He placed his hand on the tree and whispered some words that no one else could hear. Then, he walked through the tree, as one would walk through the barrier at King's Cross Station to reach Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$.

Sethrael went next, followed by Remus and then Sirius. When they reached the other side, they stared in wonder.

They stood at the top of a hill looking down into a beautiful valley. A river ran through it, and in the center of the water was a tree-covered island. From atop the hill, they could see that two footbridges had been built, one on each side, crossing the river onto the island. On the other side of the valley was another hill, almost a mirror image of the one they were standing on.

“Where is this place, Daka?” Sethrael asked, looking around in wonder. His godfathers stood on either side of him, speechless.

“It is the Realm of El,” Mithrael said.

His son looked at him in astonishment.

“What is El?” Remus asked.

“El is the Elvin word for Light. We are Children of El—Children of Light.”

“This is the land where my first parents live?” Sethrael asked his father quietly. He did not want his godfathers to hear because they sometimes got emotional when speaking of his first parents.

His father nodded. “They live in the Summerland, which is in the Realm of El.”

“Will we see them?”

“That is why we are here,” Mithrael said. “They will meet us on the island. Come, now. Follow me.”

They walked down a path leading into the valley and to the footbridge.

“Are they like ghosts?” Sethrael asked.

His father laughed. “No, they are like you. Ghosts are those who have chosen not to go to the Summerland.”

“Why would anyone choose not to come here?” Sirius asked in amazement.

“Do you have the ability to visit the Summerland whenever you want?” Remus asked.

“No, we cannot visit the Summerland. We can only go so far into this Realm. But we must not come often or we will begin to long for it and for those who are here.”

At last they reached the footbridge and began to cross over to the island. “Those who live in the Summerland cannot cross this footbridge into our realm,” Mithrael said. “And we cannot cross the footbridge on the other side of the island into the Summerland. We must meet with them here on the island, which is a land between the Realms.”

They entered the forest on the island and walked a well-trod path until they reached a small glade. There, standing in the middle of the glade, were Lily and James Potter.

Sirius was the first to reach them. Throwing his arms around James, he wept into his shoulder. Remus was not far behind him. He took Lily in his arms and hugged her as if he would never let her go.

Harry stood beside Mithrael, watching nervously. He did not remember his first Mother and Father. He did not think he would be comfortable hugging them the way his godfathers were.

After the reunion between friends, they all turned and looked at him expectantly. Harry looked up at his Dakara, feeling torn about whether to go to his first parents or stay at his father’s side. No matter who he went to, he would feel disloyal to the other.

His Dakara smiled down at him. “It is time for you to remember,” he said, sweeping his hand across his son’s forehead. And suddenly Harry remembered everything—the way his life had been with his first parents, the love they had felt for him, and the night that he had lost it all. Suddenly, he found himself in their arms, all three crying tears of joy.

Mithrael watched the reunion, glad that he had brought them today. He knew how Sirius and Remus suffered over the loss of their friends, but he must make them understand that they could visit no more than twice a full season.

And it was time for Sethrael to meet his first parents. There was wisdom he could receive from them that Mithrael could not give. There were things his son needed to know about being a Wizard. Of course, his godfathers had taught him many things, but they did not have the wisdom of those who lived in the Summerland.

Time meant nothing in the Realm of El. Perhaps they visited for hours or perhaps days, but time did not pass as it did in the Realms of Humans and Elves. After talking, laughing, and sharing many memories, the Potters announced that they must go back.

"You can visit us again in 6 months," James told them as he hugged them each goodbye.

Sethrael hugged both his parents, then watched as they walked to the footbridge that would take them to the Summerland. When his parents reached the bridge, they stopped, looking down into the clear water.

"Wait," James called to them. "Don't leave yet."

Sethrael watched his mother walk into the river. She went under for a moment, and then came back up. As she walked out of the water and back to the island, he noticed that she was as dry as if she had never gone into the water. She carried something in her hand.

It was a sword.

When Mithrael saw it, he dropped to his knees and wept. This frightened Seth because he had never seen his father cry.

"Daka! Daka! What is it?" he asked. "What is wrong?"

“Nothing is wrong,” he said as he watched Lily carry the sword toward his son. “This is what our people have been awaiting for more than a thousand full seasons. It is part of the Prophecy of El.”

Sethrael knelt beside his father.

“No, you must not kneel,” Mithrael told him. “You are the Child of the Prophecy. The sword is for you.”

Confused, Sethrael stood and waited for his mother to approach. She held the sword in both her hands, extending her arms toward him, waiting for him to take it.

“It is yours,” she said softly. “It has your name on it.”

Seth looked down and saw his name, Sethrael, etched in the steel blade. The cross-bar and pommel were gold. He took the sword by the leather grip and lifted it from his mother’s hands. He raised the tip of the sword toward the sky, extending his arm as he imagined a great hero would hold his own sword to rally his troops. Suddenly, a bolt of lightening flashed down from the clear sky and touched the tip of the sword. The blade glowed brightly with a white light, temporarily blinding those who were watching.

When his eyes had adjusted, Sethrael found himself once again standing in the middle of a circle, but this time he was surrounded by elves. All the elves that had ever crossed into the Summerland were kneeling around him, staring in wonder at the beautiful sword. But before he could comprehend what this meant, they were gone.

His first parents were also gone, and he found himself standing on the island with his father and two godfathers.

Sirius reached down and helped Mithrael to stand.

“What just happened?” Remus asked, still shocked by what he had witnessed.

Sethrael began to quote from the prophecy:

. . . he draws his sword from the Realm of El.

And he will be a Prince among you.

You shall call his name “Touched by Light.”

And his sword shall bear his name.

He shall call it

Sethrael.

Chapter 7

1 September 1991

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Order of Merlin First Class, Grand Sorcerer, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, and Headmaster of Hogwarts's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, waited almost a year before placing Mrs. Figg, a member of the Order of Phoenix, into the muggle neighborhood near the Dursley family residence. The Dursleys were Harry Potter's aunt and uncle and the owners of the doorstep on which Albus had placed the child the night after his parents were murdered.

It was another 3 months before Mrs. Figg was able to approach Petunia Dursley outside her house and engage her in a conversation about her family. Harry had been in the Elven realm for over a year when Albus finally realized that the Dursleys did not have their nephew. Quietly, he sent people to search for the boy, but no one was able to turn up any evidence of where the child might be. He sent owls to the boy, hoping they could find him, but all owls returned with their messages undelivered.

After years of searching, Albus finally admitted to himself that the child must be dead. Yet, hope still lingered, and on the night of September 1, 1991, Albus searched the faces of the first year students while they waited to be sorted hoping to see a black-haired, green-eyed child with a lightening bolt scar on his forehead. Sadly, he was disappointed.

Finally, the last child was sorted, but before Professor McGonagall could remove the sorting hat and stool, the doors to the great hall opened. As the staff and students sat in stunned silence, twelve Elven guards entered the great hall and lined up in the middle aisle between the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables. The doors opened again and a dark-haired boy, between two adult elves, walked between the guards to stand before Dumbledore at the head table. Dumbledore stood, waiting for an explanation.

The boy had long, black hair, reaching almost to his waist. He was clothed in a tunic and trousers of white silk. A gold belt was around

his waist, and around his head was a gold band with a large ruby on the front. All the elves, including the boy, were fully armed with bows, arrows, and swords.

The young boy bowed to the headmaster, and then said, "Headmaster Dumbledore, I am Prince Sethrael son of Mithrael of the Elven Realm. This is my mother, Princess Elsbeth and my father, Lord Mithrael son of Lothair." His parents nodded to the headmaster as they were introduced. "My parents wished for me to attend this school, and though I did not receive a letter, I believe that my tuition has been paid."

Albus bowed to the royal family. "Princess Elsbeth, Lord Mithrael, Prince Sethrael, I am honored to meet you. We have not had the honor of having anyone from the Elven realm attend our school before, and to my knowledge, none has applied here. I'm afraid there must be some mistake."

"My tuition was paid under my Wizarding name," the prince answered. "Harry James Potter."

Gasps of shock rippled across the room. Dumbledore did not even try to hide his own astonishment. The feeling of relief that Harry was alive was overwhelming. Placing his hand over his heart, he weakly sat down in his chair. "Harry?" he whispered.

Suddenly sounds of loud popping filled the Great Hall. Harry turned and saw that one-hundred house elves had appeared in the room, kneeling with tears streaming down their faces.

He turned to his mother, who would one day be Queen of the Elven Realm, thinking that they were here to honor her.

She smiled at him. "They are here for you, my son."

As all in the Great Hall watched in confused silence, Harry turned back to the house elves and slowly walked toward a large group of them that had assembled between the guards. "Do not bow to me, my brothers. Please rise."

When the house elves did not move, he knelt before them and placed his forehead on the floor. "If you bow to me, then I must bow to you," he said. "For we are brothers and therefore equal by the Laws of El."

"But you are the Child of Prophecy," one elf said

"Yes," said Harry, still kneeling. "Which means that soon we will live again as one people."

The old elf, which had spoken before stood, and soon the other elves followed his example. When they were all standing, Harry rose and nodded respectfully to them. The elves popped out of the Great Hall. He turned and went back to the head table.

By now, Albus had regained his composure and was again standing. His eyes twinkled at what he had just observed.

"How did you come to be in the Elven Realm?" he asked.

"When I was a baby, my father found me sleeping on a doorstep in a non-magical village," he said, and all those in the Great Hall gasped in horror. Albus, had he been a normal Wizard, would have blushed. "So he took me to the Elven Realm, and he and my mother adopted me."

"But . . . you are a Wizard," Albus said, confused.

"Yes, but I am also an Elf. The blood of both my fathers and both my mothers run through my veins."

Albus frowned. "Perhaps we should speak more about this in my office," he said.

"May I be sorted and enjoy the feast first?"

Albus forced himself to smile, but there was no twinkle in his eye. "Yes, of course. And we'll have two places set at the head table for your parents. Please, Minerva, let Harry be sorted."

Harry sat down on the stool and the professor placed the sorting hat on his head. After a moment, the hat shouted, "GRIFFINDOR!" The Gryffindor table whistled and applauded loudly. A pair of redheaded twins were dancing and shouting, "We've got Prince Harry! We've got Prince Harry!" With a large grin, Harry ran to his parents, gave each of them a hug, and then went to the Gryffindor table while his parents sat down on either side of Albus Dumbledore.

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Harry found himself sitting near the end of the long table beside a red-haired boy his age. Across from him was a bushy-haired girl.

The girl extended her arm across the table to shake his hand. "I'm Hermione Granger," she said. "It's very nice to meet you."

"I am Harry Potter, and it is nice to meet you, too."

"Ron Weasley," said the boy beside him, shaking Harry's hand also. "Have you lived with the Elves all this time, then?"

"Yes, I have been in the Elven Realm since the day after my first parents were killed by the Dark Wizard."

"Are you excited about attending Hogwarts?" Hermione asked.

Harry nodded and swallowed the bit of chicken he'd just taken a bite of. "Yes, my godfathers have both told me that their time at Hogwarts was the happiest time of their lives. I can't imagine anything being better than home, but I can't wait to find out."

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After the feast, Albus met with Harry and his Elven parents in his office. Harry sat between his mother and father. Each held one of his hands as if they all dreaded the time when they would be separated.

"I don't understand how it was you found Harry," Albus said to the parents. "He was supposed to be with his aunt and uncle who live in Surrey. That's quite a distance from any forest."

“Yes, it is,” Mithrael said. “I had to walk a long distance through many villages to get to him.”

“But what did you want with him? Why did you take him?”

“We wanted nothing from Sethrael except to give him our love,” Elsbeth said. “And to give him a good home and family and teach him our ways.”

“But, what I don’t understand is why? Why Harry? How did you know where he was?”

“I was watching his house the night the Dark Wizard killed his parents,” Mithrael said. “I followed the shape-shifter witch to where you were taking him the next morning. I saw her watch the house of the non-magical people all that day. I saw what kind of people they were, as did she. I was there when you laid him on the doorstep.”

“And then you just took him?”

“Yes.”

Dumbledore shook his head. “But that is kidnapping. It is a crime in our world. You cannot just take a child.”

“You did.”

“Yes, but—“

“You had the half-giant take the child from his godfather.”

“But his godfather was—“

“Innocent.”

“Yes, but—“

“You didn’t know that at the time.”

“No, I didn’t, which is why—“

“You should have gotten more information before placing a child with people who did not want him.”

Albus sighed. This was not going as he had intended. “Harry has a godfather in this world,” he said. “By all rights, he should be Harry’s legal guardian and should have the final say about where Harry lives.” There, that should do it, he thought smugly. It would be easier to convince Sirius that Harry was safer with his aunt and uncle.

“You are correct,” Mithrael said. “Because Sirius Black was appointed Harry’s godfather by his parents, as his legal guardian, it was necessary for us to have his permission to adopt him as our son. Sirius Black is still one of Harry’s godfathers in this world and in ours. Remus Lupin is the other. Both are his legal guardians in this world. They are whom you should contact in our place. They have permission to make decisions and handle all emergencies, and they know how to contact us.”

Albus looked surprised. “They knew where Harry was? Sirius gave you permission?”

“Yes,” Mithrael said. “They attended our wedding and Harry’s adoption ceremony. But for our son’s safety, they were obliged to keep it secret. They were not allowed to tell anyone that they had been to our realm, had seen Harry, or knew where he was.”

“I see,” Albus said thoughtfully, then smiled. “Well, we can arrange for Harry to get some robes and his books—“

“Uncle Sirius and Uncle Remus got them for me. They’re in my trunk,” Harry said.

“And your wand?”

“I’ve got that, too. And a snowy owl named Hedwig. I think I have everything.”

Albus nodded. "Very well, then. If there's nothing else, Harry, you should get to bed. Classes start in the morning."

Harry stood up and hugged each of his parents. "I'll see you at winter break," he said, trying to fight back tears. His mother nodded, wiping at her own tears.

"We are proud of you, Son," Mithrael said softly as he smoothed the boy's hair. "Remember what we have taught you. And if you need anything, contact Sirius and Remus." He smiled. "Winter break is not that far away."

Harry nodded, and then sighed. "It seems like forever, Daka." He turned and hurried out of the headmaster's office.

He found the professor who had placed the sorting hat on his head waiting for him outside the Headmaster's office. "Harry, I'm Professor McGonagall," she said. "I'm your Head of House. I'll escort you to Gryffindor Tower."

"Thank you, Professor."

"You know, I taught both of your parents, and I knew you when you were a baby."

Harry smiled. "I know. My father told me all about you."

Minerva frowned. "Your father?"

"Yes, my first father—the one who was killed by the Dark Wizard. He told me about your being his Head of House. He thinks very highly of you. You were his favorite professor."

She shook her head. "I'm afraid I'm a little confused, Harry. I don't understand how you can remember something that was said when you were still a baby."

"Oh, no, Professor. I am remembering from when I talked to my parents this past summer. My Elven father takes my godfathers and me to the Realm of El every . . . um . . . 6 months, and we visit with

my first parents. We meet on my birthday and on my first mother's birthday because they are exactly 6 months apart."

"The Realm of El?" she asked.

"Yes, it's like . . ." He thought for a moment. "In the Human Realm, it has other names. I believe many people call it Heaven. It is where people live who have crossed over into the Summerland, I mean Heaven. Some of them have crossed because they have died, like my first parents."

"And you can visit them?" she asked as if she didn't really believe him.

"Oh, yes. Elves can cross into that realm, but no more often than every 6 months. If one goes more often, he longs to stay there and longs for the people who live there."

She nodded politely.

"You should talk with my godfather Remus Lupin about it," he said. "He and Uncle Sirius go with us each time. It has made them happier to be able to speak with my first parents once again."

"I will do that," she said with raised brows.

They stopped in front of a portrait of a very plump lady in a pink dress. "This is the entrance to your common room," said Professor McGonagall. "The password is courage."

The door opened and Harry and his professor walked into a large empty parlor. The fire had almost died, leaving just the glowing embers. "Your room is up that staircase," she said pointing. "On the door, it will say First Year Boys. Your trunk has already been placed at the foot of your bed. The other boys are probably asleep by now, so go in as quietly as you can."

"Thank you, Professor McGonagall," he said, and climbed the stairs to the dormitories.

Chapter 8

Harry did not sleep well that night. He could not remember a time that he had slept in a soft bed, and he was not used to the cold. He missed wrapping himself in furs and lying on the firm ground.

He pulled the curtains closed around his bed, pretending they were the skins that protected them from the night rains and early morning mists. He pretended that he was sleeping on very soft skins piled high because they had brought too many out of the cave that evening. He pretended that the breathing he was hearing from the other boys in the room were his parents as they lay near him wrapped in their own furs.

“Remember me, Eldartha,” he whispered to the oldest tree in the forest. “And share with me your wisdom as I begin my new life in this world. Remember me and know that I will return.”

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Dressed in his school robes, his hair in a long braid down his back, compliments of Lavender Brown, a girl in his year, Harry hurried down to breakfast the next morning. He sat with the boys with whom he had shared a room.

“So, what’s it like being raised with elves?” the redheaded boy, Ron, asked him.

"I don't know if it's different from being raised with wizards," Harry replied. "I don't have anything to compare it to."

“Did you get to practice magic before coming to Hogwarts?” Neville Longbottom asked.

Harry nodded and swallowed a mouthful of sausage. “Elven magic. Uncle Remus told me that I wasn’t allowed to use my wand, but Uncle Sirius tried to teach me a few things before we got caught.”

The other boys laughed.

The first class of the day was transfiguration. Harry had been doing this wandless for several years, but it was the first time he had tried it with a wand. It took several tries before he could turn the matchstick into a needle, but he got it before the end of class, although the magic was not as powerful when filtered through the wooden stick. Professor McGonagall gave him 5 points. Hermione Granger, another Gryffindor, was the only other student to successfully transfigure the object correctly. She also received 5 points.

In potions, the professor took the roll. When he got to Harry's name, he said, "Ah, Prince Harry. Our new celebrity."

Harry stood up to address his teacher. "Sir, I am only a prince in the Elven realm, and there I am treated no differently from any other elf my age. In this world, I am an ordinary wizard. If it is proper for me to do so, Sir, I request to be treated like everyone else."

"Oh, you will be, Mr. Potter. You can count on it."

Harry sat back down and listened to his professor's lecture. "Mr. Potter," Professor Snape said suddenly. "What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

Harry stood. "The Sleep of Death, Sir, or I think in your world it is called Draught of Living Death."

Snape looked surprised.

"Where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar, Mr. Potter?"

"In the stomach of a goat, Sir."

"What is the difference, Mr. Potter, between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

"They are the same plant, Sir. It also goes by the name of aconite."

Snape stared at Harry for a moment, and then looked at the rest of the class. "Well? Why aren't you all copying that down? See me after class, Mr. Potter."

“Yes, Sir,” Harry said, finally taking his seat.

Harry was glad when the double potions class was over. He didn't know whether Snape was testing him or taunting him. However, he did get full marks on his first potion. It was a healing salve used for burns and bruises that he had often made when working with his mother. It was evident that the professor preferred the Slytherins to the Gryffindors, but he had not spoken to Harry since telling him to see him when class was over.

After packing up his things, Harry made his way to Snape's desk. The man looked at him for a moment, then asked, “Where did you learn so much about plants and potion brewing, Mr. Potter?”

“My father has been teaching me about plants since I was very small, and my mother started teaching me potion brewing when I was six,” he answered.

“Do you like potion brewing?”

“Oh, yes, Sir,” he said excitedly. “It is fascinating.”

Snape almost smiled. “If you study hard, Mr. Potter, I believe that you'll be a fine brewer one day.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Harry said, giving the man a genuine smile. “I will study as hard as I can.”

Snape nodded. “That is all, Mr. Potter.”

Outside the classroom door, he found Ron and Hermione waiting for him. “What did he want?” Ron asked worriedly.

“Oh, he only wanted to know how I learned about plants and potion brewing.”

“How did you learn?” Hermione asked.

“From my parents,” he said, and then accompanied them to the Great Hall for lunch.

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At lunch, a blonde-haired boy and his two large friends passed by their table. “Hey, Elf-boy!” the blonde boy said with a smirk.

Harry laughed. “I am not an Elf boy,” he said. “In my world, I am an Elf man.”

“Really,” said the boy, looking down his nose at Harry.

“Yes, and my name is Harry Potter,” he said. He stood up and held out his hand to shake the other boy’s hand.”

After a moment’s hesitation, the blonde boy took his hand. “Draco Malfoy,” he said.

“It is very nice to meet you, Draco. I wonder if you could have Elf blood. You have the hair, eyes, and physique of my people.”

Draco shook his head. “No, I’m a pureblood Wizard. We don’t have mixed blood.”

Harry nodded. “That is too bad. There is much magic that would be available to you if you had some Elf blood. Perhaps you should check with your parents to make sure. After all, many people think that the Dark Wizard Voldemort was a pureblood wizard, but his father was not magical. I think you would call him a Muggle. Is that correct?”

“The Dark Lord does not have Muggle blood,” Draco argued.

“Oh, yes. His name was Tom Riddle before he changed it to Voldemort, and that was also his father’s name. His mother was a witch, but his father was a Muggle. I am sure you can find more information about him in the library.”

“Probably the restricted section,” Ron grumbled.

“How do you know so much about V-v-v . . . you-know-who?” Neville Longbottom asked. By this time, the entire table of Gryffindors and the three Slytherins were listening to what Harry had to say about the most feared Wizard who had ever lived.

“Voldemort?” Harry asked. “Because my father told me about him. Many of the Elders knew of him when he was still at Hogwarts. His story is a lesson that is taught to children in our world.”

“Voldemort went to Hogwarts?” Hermione asked.

“Yes, he was in Slytherin house. He was also Head Boy.”

“Is there a problem here?” Asked a deep, cold voice.

Harry turned and saw his potions professor standing behind him. “No, Sir. There haven’t been any problems, but thank you for your concern.”

Snape raised an eyebrow at him, and then glanced questioningly at Draco. “And what are you doing at the Gryffindor table, Mr. Malfoy?”

“We were just talking, Sir,” Draco said.

“Sir, is it against the rules for different houses to interact?” Harry asked. “If it is, I wasn’t aware of it, and it is, therefore, my fault that Draco and his friends are still here. I was the one who engaged them in conversation.”

“No, Mr. Potter, it is not against the rules. It is just very unusual to find a group of Slytherins and Gryffindors engaged in a conversation that does not include drawn wands and several curses. If, however, that is not the case here, you may carry on.” He turned and walked toward the head table, his cloak billowing behind him.

Draco turned to Harry and smirked at him. “I’ll see you later, Potter,” he said, and then he and his two large companions made their way to the Slytherin table.

“Harry,” Ron whispered. “You shouldn’t be talking to Slytherins.”

“Why? Professor Snape said it wasn’t against the rules.”

“They’re evil. They’re followers of You-Know-Who.”

Harry frowned and shook his head. “No, I don’t know who.”

“You know—HIM—V-v-v—the Dark Wizard.”

“Oh,” Harry said, finally understanding. He glanced over at the Slytherin table for a moment, and then shook his head. “No. Not yet,” he said. “But we would do well to befriend them. Perhaps we can prevent them from making a mistake.”

“That’s a very good idea, Harry,” Hermione said.

Ron turned to her. “You won’t think that when he starts calling you names because of your Muggle blood,” he said.

“But he hasn’t done that, Ron,” Harry said. “Do not be angry with him for a wrong he has not yet committed.”

Ron shook his head. “You’re mental,” he said. “Both of you.”

Harry and Hermione grinned at each other then turned their attention to the food.

By the end of his first week at school, Harry Potter had become the youngest seeker at Hogwarts in a century. Professor McGonagall had seen him save Neville Longbottom from a fall when his broomstick went out of control at their first flying lesson. Neville had been hanging by his cloak from the sword of a statue that was located on one of the roofs of the castle. Harry had gotten Neville loose, gotten him safely on the back of his own broomstick, and then dove down to catch the rememberall which had fallen from Neville’s pocket. It was the most brilliant save she had seen in years. Not since Charley Weasley had played seeker for Gryffindor had she seen anything so daring.

All in all, it was a very good week for Harry. He had made several friends and classes were going well. He didn't care much for Professor Quirrell, the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, but the others were okay. He wrote to his parents and godparents to let them know about his first week of school, sending his parent's letter to Sirius and Remus with instructions to place it in the tree behind Remus's house. He knew they would get the message.

On Friday evening, in the Gryffindor common room, Harry and Ron sat at a table playing chess. Hermione sat beside Harry, writing an essay. Across from her, Neville was reading a book on Herbology.

"Ron," Harry said, watching the redheaded boy capture his knight. "Can I ask you something?"

"Sure," Ron answered, searching the board for his next move.

"You know that I'm new to the Wizarding world, so some of my questions might sound stupid."

"There's no such thing as a stupid question," Hermione interjected, not looking up from her essay. "The only stupid question is the one that's not asked."

The three boys looked at each other questioningly, wondering if the other two had understood what Hermione had said. From the confused look on all their faces, it was evident that none of them did.

"Right, then," Harry continued. "I was just wondering if, in the Wizarding world, it was normal for a Wizard to have a second face on the back of the back of his head."

Ron stopped searching the board; Neville stopped reading his book; Hermione looked up from her essay. They all stared at him as if he had just told them that Snape was retiring from Hogwarts to become a ballerina.

"I guess it's not that normal then," Harry said.

“No, that’s pretty uncommon,” Ron said. “In fact, I don’t think I’ve ever heard of any wizard having an extra face on the back of his head. Have you, Neville?”

“No,” Neville answered. “That would be considered strange even in the Wizarding world.”

“Why do you ask?” Hermione asked.

Harry leaned over and spoke quietly to the other three. “Professor Quirrell has a very ugly face growing out of the back of his head underneath that purple turban.”

His three companions burst into laughter.

“Oh, Harry! That’s the funniest thing I’ve ever heard!” Hermione said, wiping tears of mirth from her eyes.

“Is it uglier than the one that’s growing on the front of his head?” Ron gasped.

Neville fell out of his chair laughing.

Harry, grinning at their reaction, waited until they had stopped laughing, then said, “The face on the back of his head is evil. It has possessed the professor and is trying to make him steal something called the Philosopher’s Stone. Do any of you know what that is?”

“A Philosopher’s Stone is what alchemists attempt to create. It’s supposed to turn lead into gold and give eternal life to the owner.”

Harry nodded thoughtfully. “Maybe we should tell Dumbledore.”

“Harry,” Ron said. “You’re not going to trick us into going to Dumbledore with that story. I’ve lived with Fred and George too long to be taken in by something like that.”

“Harry, how do you know all of this?” Hermione asked.

“Whenever I’m near him, my scar hurts,” Harry answered. “And I can hear what the evil wizard is thinking.”

“But how do you know there is a face? Have you seen it?”

“When I hear the voice, I see the face in my mind.”

Hermione frowned. “Maybe we should go to Dumbledore,” she said worriedly.

“Hermione! He’s pulling your leg!” Ron said.

“I’m not, Ron. I swear,” Harry said, holding his hands above the table. “My hands are nowhere near her leg.”

This started another round of laughter.

Chapter 9

Remus entered the cottage that had once belonged to his parents. He set the bags from the market down on a counter and the kitchen and glanced over at Sirius, who was sitting at the kitchen table reading a letter. "Is that from Harry?" he asked.

Sirius nodded without looking up. After a few moments, he said, "I think you'd better sit down, Remus, and listen to this."

Remus gave him a worried look, but sat down at the table to listen as Sirius read the letter aloud.

Dear Uncle Sirius and Uncle Remus,

My first quidditch match is on Saturday, 10 November. We're playing Slytherin, and I really want you to be there. Please let Metha and Daka know and ask them to come, too. If you think it will help, tell Metha I'm very, very homesick and that if I don't see her soon, I'll probably die. But don't tell her that in front of Daka because he might think I'm a big baby or something.

You'll never guess what happened on Halloween night! I killed a full-grown mountain troll in the 2nd floor girl's bathroom. It was trying to kill my friend Hermione, so I took out my sling and popped him with a stone right between the eyes. I did it with one shot! It fell face down on the floor. I wanted to make sure it was knocked out, so I picked up it's club and bashed it in the back of the head. I didn't mean to kill it, but the club was really heavy, so I ended up cracking his skull. McGonagall gave me 5 points for "sheer dumb luck." Please tell Daka about the troll, but not in front of Metha because it might make her worry.

I like all my teachers, except for one. My DADA professor smells like garlic and has a face growing out of the back of his head. He hides it under a purple turban. My friends tell me that that's not normal, even in the Wizarding world. The extra face belongs to an evil wizard that's possessed him and is trying to get him to steal the Philosopher's Stone, which he believes Dumbledore has hidden in the school. I think the Stone is hidden under a trap door in a room on the third floor

because there is a giant three-headed dog named Fluffy guarding something in there. I'm pretty sure that the evil wizard is Voldemort because, when I get near him, my scar hurts really bad and I can hear the evil wizard's thoughts. Please don't tell Daka or Metha about that because they might think it's not safe for me to be at school, since Voldemort has already tried to kill me once.

To sum up, tell Metha about the homesick thing, but not Daka. Tell Daka about the mountain troll, but not Metha. Don't tell either of them about Voldemort growing out of the back of Quirrell's head, but tell them both about the quidditch match.

I miss you both very much and can't wait to see you at my first match.

Love,

Harry

PS: I was going to owl this letter three days ago, but by the time I finished writing it, it was too late to go to the owlery, so I decided to owl it the next day after lunch. But that morning, after DADA class, Professor Quirrell asked me to stay after to help him move some books to another room. I carried the books to the third floor, but then he opened the door to Fluffy's room, and I got kind of suspicious. I dropped the books and started to run away. He grabbed me, and when he did, he screamed because his hands started burning, but he still came after me. I tried to push him away, but when I touched his face, it started burning, too. Then his whole body turned to ashes and crumbled. That's when I found out that it had definitely been Voldemort growing from the back of his head. When Quirrell crumbled, Voldemort's spirit got really angry. He flew right through me. I don't know what happened after that because I passed out and woke up 3 days later in the hospital wing. Dumbledore told me that Voldemort was gone, but we're definitely going to need a new DADA professor. Don't worry, though. Nobody's mad at me for killing the old DADA professor.

PPS: So are you definitely coming to my first quidditch match?

PPPS: Please don't tell my parents I killed the DADA professor.

Love,

Harry

When he finished reading the letter, Sirius looked up at Remus. "Well? What do you think?"

Remus shook his head. "If I didn't know Harry so well, I would think that letter was a joke. But knowing him like I do, we haven't heard the worst of it."

"I agree, Remus, and I think it's time to pay a little visit to our favorite Headmaster."

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Dear Metha and Daka,

You're not going to believe this, but guess who my new DADA professor is! Uncle Sirius! My old DADA professor died unexpectedly. He had something growing out of his head and a very severe skin condition. Yesterday morning, I wrote to tell Uncle Sirius and Uncle Remus about it, and that very afternoon, they arrived at Hogwarts demanding that Old Long Beard give Uncle Sirius the job! I didn't realize he needed one so badly. Maybe he's always wanted to teach the subject. Whatever the reason, Uncle Remus is going to stay here with him to provide some extra security at the school.

My first quidditch match is on Saturday, 10 November. Please try to come. I can't wait to see you. I miss you so much. Uncle Sirius bought me a brand new broom for the match, and I can't wait for you to see how fast I can fly.

Daka, will you talk to my godfathers and ask them not to follow me around all the time? Every time I look up, one of them is watching me. I think they've forgotten that I'm 11 years old instead of 1. By the way, don't forget that I'll be 12 this summer, and you promised that I could start learning to fight with my sword.

Metha, please, please, please come to the match and bring some of those chocolate biscuits that you make for me. I miss you so much. I get so homesick sometimes thinking about you, but I don't cry or anything. I probably would if I was still a little kid, though.

School is going fine so far; nothing out of the ordinary; just the same old stuff. I'm studying very hard and learning everything I can. I can't wait to see you!

Love,

Seth

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Albus Dumbledore sat at his desk, head in hand, while 20 parents sat waving letters at him from their children, demanding to know what kind of school he was running to allow a troll in the halls and a possessed DADA professor to teach their children.

The group included parents, grandparents, and godparents of children from all four houses: Harry's Elven parents and grandparents, along with his two godfathers, the Weasleys, the Grangers, Neville Longbottom's grandmother, the Malfoys, the Patils, Mr. Lovegood, Amelia Bones, Mrs. Zabini, and the Diggorys. The parents who had not come to the school had sent letters and howlers. It was the worst experience of Albus Dumbledore's career as headmaster.

All 4 heads of houses stood against the wall, watching the scene with amusement. He knew he would get no help from any of them.

Finally, Albus held up his hand and the parents quieted. "I regret the incidents that took place here in the past few days. I hired Professor Quirrell last year before the end of term. He had not been possessed at that time. When he returned for school, he was wearing a turban, but unfortunately, I did not know what had happened to him. Professor Quirrell brought the troll into the school, and now that he is gone, there is nothing to be concerned about. A new teacher has been hired, and the school is perfectly safe."

“What about the Philosopher’s Stone?” Lucius Malfoy asked.

“It has been destroyed.”

“But why was the Stone at the school?” Mrs. Weasley asked.

“I believed it to be the safest place.”

“Guarded by a giant 3-headed dog?” Mrs. Diggory asked.

“The dog was chained and locked in a room in a restricted wing of the school where children were not allowed.”

“And, yet, 3 children were injured,” Amelia Bones said.

“Yes, regrettably, they were. However, all have recovered completely and are back in class.”

“Why were we not informed?” Remus asked. “We didn’t know that Harry had been injured until he sent us a letter 3 days later.”

“That was an oversight,” Albus said. “A mistake I do not intend to make again.”

“Headmaster,” Mithrael said. “With your permission, I would like to see my son. I’m sure the other parents would like to see their children as well.”

The other parents agreed, and Albus was delighted to have them leave him in peace.

“Yes, of course,” Albus said, relieved to see an end to the questions and accusations. “I will send for your children and have them meet you in the Great Hall. Minerva, if you and the other heads would escort our guests . . . “

“Of course, Albus,” she said, and then turned to the parents. “If you will follow Professors Sprout, Flitwick, Snape, and me, we will show you where you can visit with your children.”

As the parents filed out of the office, Minerva stayed back waiting for Remus and Sirius to pass. She took their arms and asked them to walk with her. They fell back behind the others. "I want to ask you about something that Harry told me," she said. "About a place he called the Summerland."

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On their way to the Great Hall, Lucius and Narcissa Malfoy rounded a corner to find the family of Elves waiting for them.

"Lucius," Queen Thespa said. "I have not met your wife."

Lucius gave the Elven Queen a brief bow. “Queen Thespa,” he said. “Allow me to introduce my wife, Narcissa Black Malfoy. Narcissa, the Lady Thespa, Queen of the Elven Realm.”

“And your mother’s sister and your godmother,” Queen Thespa added, trying to hide a smile.

Lucius nodded in agreement. “Yes,” he said with a slight smile. “Aunt Thespa is all of those things.”

The Queen introduced her family to Narcissa, and then took her nephew's arm. "May I walk with you?" she asked.

“Of course,” he said, and Lord Kathair took Narcissa’s arm. He and the other elves fell back so that Thespa could speak with Lucius in private.

“Your mother was the envy of us all,” she said. “I have never seen a woman loved so much by her son. She was truly blessed to have you, Lucius.”

"I loved her very much," he said.

“And, yet, you have not been to the Realm of El to speak with her.”

He shook his head.

“But why?”

He hesitated a moment, but then spoke without emotion. “She would be ashamed of me.”

“Your mother would never be ashamed of you, Lucius. She might be disappointed, but never ashamed. She loved you even more than you loved her.”

“I tried to help her—“

“I know, Lucius, I was there. You tried to get me in to see her, but your father found us out.”

A muscle twitched in his jaw, but his expression revealed no emotion. “Yes, he did.”

“And you were brutally beaten for your efforts.”

“I was.”

“You do not treat your son as your father treated you.”

“I have never raised a hand to my son.”

“No Elf would treat his family the way your father treated you and your mother.”

“Aunt Thespa, I am a Wizard.”

“You are also an Elf.”

Lucius sighed. “You don’t understand our world. It’s not like the one in which you live. Things must be hidden here.”

“Obviously, for you have not even told your son of his heritage, even though he has asked.”

“He did ask me in a letter after he had spoken with your grandson.”

“Yes, Sethrael saw the signs.”

“Only another Elf would. In this world, pure blood is what is valued.”

“Not to all, Lucius. You were taught that all creatures are equal. But that was before your Dark Wizard forced you to change your mind, a man who was not even a pureblood himself, yet telling his followers that he was.”

“He was not my Dark Lord, Aunt Thespa. I was under the Imperious—“

“You forget to whom you are speaking, Lucius. Have you been away from our world so long that you forgot that I can hear your thoughts?”

Lucius casually turned his head to see if anyone had heard his aunt speak. When he was sure no one had, he turned back to his aunt. “I made an error in judgment,” he said. “But he is gone now.”

“He is not gone. His soul still roams this realm. He is looking for a servant who can perform the ritual to give him a new body, and then he will return.”

Lucius face paled. “I pray you are wrong.”

“I wish I were, but you know that I am not. Do you remember the Prophecy of El?”

“Yes.”

“The Child has come, Lucius. He’s been found. You know what that means. Do not let your lust for power destroy you, my son. All those who follow the Dark Wizard will fall.”

For the first time, his face revealed the torment he felt. “If he is alive, he will come for me,” he whispered fiercely. “What am I to do? If I don’t return when he calls, he will think me a traitor. He will kill my family and me, and it won’t be an easy death. It will be long, drawn-out, and painful. He is a monster, Aunt Thespa. You have no idea.”

"If you come to me, you will have help, Lucius. He cannot reach you or your family in our realm."

"I can't leave everything and go to the Elven Realm." He smirked. "Can you see Narcissa sleeping on the ground?"

"You would not have to leave everything, Lucius. You can lock your gold and your treasures away in your Gringott's vault and close up your house. They will be there when you return."

"I am not the man I was when you knew me, Aunt Thespa. I am no longer of the Light."

"It is not too late to shed the darkness, Lucius. A change of heart, a purification ritual, and time spent in the Elven Realm are what you need."

"My heart cannot change. I am too much like my father."

"You are nothing like that monster! Your soul is wounded, Lucius, but it is not beyond repair. Your heart has grown cold, but it has not turned to stone. You have blood on your hands and have committed cruel acts, but there are those whom you love more than your own self. You still love your mother; you love your wife; and you both love your son. If it were too late for you, you would not be able to love them so much. You would give your life for them. Your father would have let you die to save himself. And he killed your mother. Never say that you are like him, for it is a lie."

He gave his aunt a small smile. "You think more of me than you should," he said. "But then, you have always thought the best of those who did not deserve it."

His aunt sighed. "I grow weary of your stubbornness. I am right, and you must listen to me. It is time to tell your son the truth. If you do not, he will find out from someone else, and he will lose his trust in you. If you explain why you did not tell him before, he will understand."

"Yes, your highness," he said, smiling at her.

Trying and failing to look stern, she slapped him on the arm.

Chapter 10

There were no more threats to the children after Sirius became the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and Remus appointed himself the Head of School Security. Albus Dumbledore could hardly complain about being forced to allow the two Marauders to stay at the school. He was on thin ice with the Board of Governors, and the security they were providing was helping him to restore his own security as Headmaster. And Sirius was the best Defense teacher the school had seen in many years.

For Harry, it was a very good year. Gryffindor not only won the House Cup, but the Quidditch Cup as well. Oliver Wood, the team's captain, was so grateful that Harry took to hiding behind the team's beaters, Fred and George Weasley, afraid that Oliver was going to try to kiss him.

Harry's parents, grandparents, and godparents were at every Quidditch match, and his mother always brought him his favorite chocolate biscuits, which he shared with the other Gryffindors.

At one time, he had thought that he could not be happier than when he was in the Elven Realm with his family, but over the past year, he had made friendships and had experiences that he had never imagined before. He had learned much about the Wizarding World and the magic that was quite different from what he had learned from his parents. He had also begun to fit in better, although he refused to allow Lavender Brown to cut his hair. However, he still allowed her to braid it every morning.

When the day finally arrived, Harry took his first ride on the Hogwarts Express, even though it would have been much easier for his father to have taken him back to the Elven Realm through a portal in the Forbidden Forest. However, Harry wanted to ride with his friends, so Sirius and Remus met him at King's Cross Station and they used the fireplace in the Leaky Cauldron to floo to Remus's cottage.

But no matter how much he had enjoyed his year at Hogwarts, the night he returned home to the Elven Realm, he realized just how much he had missed it. His people welcomed him home that evening

with a celebration. He sat with his friends at supper and told them about his experiences in the Wizarding World. Afterwards, he was invited into the circle to tell the story of his victory over the troll and his possessed professor who had the Dark Wizard's face on the back of his head.

Being away for 10 months had not lessened his abilities at storytelling. The tale was both frightening and funny. As he acted the part of the stuttering Professor Quirrell in his purple turban, his audience wiped tears of mirth from their laughing faces.

That night, as he snuggled beneath his furs, he was lulled to sleep by the sounds of the forest and the breathing of his parents who lay just an arm-length away. And he realized that this was where he felt secure and loved. This was where his heart was. No matter what happened in the future, no matter how far he traveled, this was the place he would always return to. This was home.

Harry Potter was a very happy boy.

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Summer 1992

"Daka, why can't we use real swords? Why do we have to practice with these wooden ones?" Harry asked for the hundredth time that day, it seemed.

Mithrael sighed and leaned on his own wooden sword. "Sethrael, how many times have you asked me that same question?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know."

"Why do you continue to ask a question you already know the answer to?"

He shrugged again.

"Seth?"

Harry sighed heavily. "Because it's the nearest thing to whining that I'm allowed to do without getting into trouble."

Mithrael laughed at the honest though unexpected answer. "I suppose that answer is as good as any other. Why don't you answer the question yourself? What is the reason that we practice with wooden swords rather than with real ones?"

"Because I could get injured or cause an injury with the real sword until I develop the skill to use it," he quoted mechanically.

"Ten point to Gryffindor," Mithrael said, lightening the mood and causing his son to laugh. "Now, do you want to continue practicing, or shall we do as your Mother asked and gather the herbs she wanted?"

"Practice," Harry said, grinning, and Mithrael once again raised his wooden sword.

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In a large mansion in Wiltshire, Draco knocked on the door of his father's study.

"Come," he heard his father call from inside the room.

Draco opened the door and entered the large room. His father was seated at his desk, writing in one of his journals. "What is it, Draco?"

"Father, may I ask you a question?"

His father put the quill in a holder, dried the ink on the parchment with his wand, and closed the journal. "What do you want to ask me?" he said, giving his son his full attention and pointing to a chair.

Draco sat where his father had indicated. "Who is Tom Riddle?" he asked.

His father frowned. "Where did you hear that name?"

“Someone at school told me that it was the name of the Dark Lord before he changed it.”

Lucius hesitated and watched his son closely as if trying to read his thoughts. “Who was the person who told you this?”

“It was someone who—“

His father raised an eyebrow, and Draco sighed. “It was Harry Potter.”

His father nodded as if the answer was the one he had been expecting. “Draco, you must never say that name. It would be very dangerous if the wrong person heard you. It could cost you your life.”

The boy's face drained of what little color he had. “Why?” he whispered fearfully. “Is it true, then?”

“Yes, but very few people know that they are the same person.”

“And it's true that he's a halfblood?”

Lucius eyes widened. “What did you say?”

“Harry Potter told us that the Dark Lord's father was a Muggle—that his name was also Tom Riddle, but that his mother was a witch.”

Lucius shook his head. “That's something you must never repeat.”

“So, it's not true, then?”

“I—“ Lucius leaned back in his chair and stared down at his desk thoughtfully. “I don't know. Queen Thespa has said so. I wouldn't have thought it possible, but more than likely, it is true.” He looked up at his son. “But, Draco, you must never repeat that. If the Dark Lord returns, those are the most dangerous words that you could possibly utter.”

Draco stared at his father in horror. “He's going to return?”

“Queen Thespa has said so, and I have never known her to be wrong.”

“What are we going to do, Father?”

“We are not going to do anything, Draco. You are going to forget what you heard and let me handle it.”

“Can’t we go live with the Elves? Your aunt is the Queen. We could stay with her in her palace.”

Lucius laughed. “Palace! Draco, Elves don’t live in palaces. They don’t even live in houses. They wear animal skins and sleep on the ground.”

“Harry Potter and his parents wore silks and gold when he arrived at Hogwarts,” he argued.

“Those are ceremonial clothes, only taken out of a cave for special occasions. They bathe in the river, Draco. They hunt for food and gather wild vegetables. They don’t use wands; they use bows and arrows. Everything they own is carried in pouches on their belts or in a quiver on their backs.”

“But, you lived there!”

“I didn’t live there, Draco. I spent time there with my mother when I was a child. It is not a life that you or your mother could easily adjust to. You’re used to being waited on by house elves and having everything you want. There, if you want to eat, you have to work for it. You would not last a day in the Elven Realm.”

Draco frowned. “You did.”

His father smiled slightly. “I survived it.”

“You must have hated it.”

“Actually, Draco, it was the only happy part of my childhood.”

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Harry followed his father out of the portal and into the woods behind the Burrow. After a short walk, he stopped to stare at the strange-looking building in awe. "Is that it, Daka?"

His father smiled. "That is it."

It reminded Harry of the only birthday cake that Sirius had ever made for him. It had been tall, lopsided, and haphazardly decorated. The middle had been raw and runny while the edges had been burned. It was Sirius's last attempt at baking. Remus made the cakes from then on.

"It's better than Hogwarts!" Harry said, and his father laughed. "Can we go in?"

"In the Wizarding World, it is customary to stand outside and knock on the opening. You must not go in unless you are invited."

Harry nodded. "May I knock on the opening, Daka?"

"Of course."

Harry and his father walked to the back door of the Burrow, and Harry knocked. A woman with red hair came to the opening. She wore an apron over her brightly colored robe.

"I am Harry Potter," he said. "And this is my father, Mithrael. We have come to see Ron, if it is convenient."

She smiled at them. "Of course it's convenient. Come in, and I'll call him." They followed her into a large kitchen with a table that would seat 20 people. "Sit down and I'll make some tea. Are you hungry? Have you had breakfast?"

"We are not hungry, but thank you," Mithrael said. "Tea would be appreciated, however."

Mrs. Weasley went to the foot of the stairs and hollered. "Ron! Harry is here to see you!" She then went to the kitchen and made the tea.

Ron bounced down the stairs and found Harry and his father seated at the table drinking tea and talking with Mrs. Weasley.

"Hey, Harry!" Ron said excitedly. "How did you get here?"

"We walked," Harry said.

Ron turned to Mithrael. "Hello, Mr. Po—I mean, Mr. Daka."

Harry and his father laughed. "Daka means Dad, Ron. My father's name is Mithrael. Elves do not have two names the way Wizards do."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Mithrael," Ron said, his ears as red as his hair.

"It is just Mithrael, Ron," the Elf said, smiling. "And it is good to see you again."

"So, Harry, can you stay a while? Me and Ginny were—"

"Ginny and I," his mother corrected, and Ron rolled his eyes.

"Ginny and I were about to get our broomsticks and go to the orchard to toss the quaffle around."

Harry looked at his father, who nodded.

"Ginny!" Ron yelled up the stairs. "Come on! Harry's here!"

There was a loud pounding noise on the stairs as the twins made their way down. "Harry!" one of them called. "Just the gentleman we were hoping to see."

Harry eyed the twins suspiciously. He had been the victim of their pranks more often than he wished to remember. "Why were you hoping to see me?" he asked warily.

“Oh, no you don’t!” Mrs. Weasley said. “You leave Harry alone while he’s here. If you want to go to the orchard, get your broomsticks, but no pranks, and that’s final.”

The twins rolled their eyes.

“Hey, with Harry here, we could play 3 on 3,” one twin said.

“If Percy will play,” the other said.

“Percy!” they both called up the stairs. Harry wondered if anyone ever actually spoke without yelling in this house.

“What?” came Percy’s annoyed voice from upstairs.

“Harry’s here,” George said.

“Come play quidditch with us,” Fred added.

“Oh, all right,” Percy called down after a moment. “I’ll be right there.”

Harry turned to his father. “Dad, will you watch us play?” he asked.

“Of course,” he said, and then his gaze moved past Harry to something behind him. Harry turned to see what had caught his father’s attention.

He had not heard her enter the kitchen, yet there she stood--a girl whose hair was the dark auburn color of his first mother’s. It had been pulled back into a ponytail, but fine wisps had escaped in soft waves around her face. She wore a green blouse with shorts that had once been a pair of old jeans. But someone had cut them off above the knee, folded them into cuffs, and embroidered a simple pattern with light blue thread to keep the cuffs from unfolding. Her feet were bare, and her long legs and arms were tanned. Unlike her brother, she only had a few freckles scattered across the bridge of her nose. Her eyes were large and the color of cinnamon. She reminded him of the woods—of cinnamon and peppermint--of warmth and fire. He could easily imagine her with a quiver of arrows on her back, bow in hand, running through the forest.

"You're—Ginny," he said softly.

She nodded. "You're Harry."

He nodded. "I play seeker for Gryffindor," he said, suddenly feeling a great need to impress her. "I caught the snitch at every game."

"I know," she said. "I can play seeker, too, but I'm a better chaser."

"Do you—like to climb trees?"

She nodded.

"Me, too. I can climb to the highest branch of the highest tree in the forest."

"There's a huge tree in the woods behind our house. I bet you can't climb to the top of that."

"I bet I can."

"I bet I can beat you to the top."

"I bet you can't."

She took off running out the back door with Harry in hot pursuit.

Ron, who had been witnessing the interplay quietly, turned to his mother in confusion. The twins burst into laughter. Just then, Percy came down the stairs and into the kitchen. "Where are Harry and Ginny?" he asked. "I thought we were going to play quidditch."

Chapter 11

Draco Malfoy did not heed his father's warning. At every opportunity, he searched the Malfoy library for information on Tom Riddle. After days of turning up nothing but dust mites, he happened upon something in his father's private study.

It was an old diary. The year on the cover was 1943. The pages were blank, but the name T. M. Riddle was written in ink on the inside cover. Placing another book in the spot where he had found the diary, so that it would not be obvious that it had been taken, he took the book into his bedroom.

Sitting at his desk, he opened the diary and began to flip through the pages to see if he had missed anything. Nothing. Every page was blank. He thought for a moment, then took his wand and cast a charm to make invisible ink become visible. Still nothing.

"Reveal your secrets," he said, tapping the diary with his wand. When no words appeared, he sat back in his chair and thought a moment. Why would his father have a blank diary that belonged to Tom Riddle? If nothing was in it, why not just throw it away? There must be some sort of spell that he hadn't learned that was preventing him from seeing the writing. He was sure that, if he could find a way to read it, it would answer all his questions about Tom Riddle.

Opening a bottle of ink, he dipped a quill in it, then wrote on the first page of the diary: Who are you?

To his surprise, the words were absorbed by the parchment, once again leaving the page blank. And then, new words appeared: I am Tom Riddle. Who are you?

Draco slammed the diary closed, and then stuffed it one of his desk drawers. His heart pounded and his hands were shaking. Had Voldemort read the words he wrote? Did he know who wrote them? Did he know that Draco had his diary?

"Dobby!" he called, and the little house elf appeared immediately.

“How can Dobby help Master Draco?” he asked, bowing.

“Dobby, I want you to take something away, where no one will ever find it. I think it might be dangerous, but you can’t tell my father that you’ve seen it.”

“Yes, Master Draco. Dobby can do that, unless Master Malfoy orders Dobby to tell him what Dobby knows about the something.”

Draco opened the drawer, and then gave Dobby the diary. “It was the Dark Lord’s,” he said. “It’s a diary, and it’s enchanted, but I don’t know what it does.”

Dobby looked down at the book in his hand, then dropped it suddenly and backed away. “Dark Lord’s book is bad!” he said looking at Draco sternly. “Dobby not touch it, and Little Master should not touch it, either.”

Draco thought a moment. “If I put it in a box, can you touch the box? Will you take it away if you don’t have to touch it?”

Dobby nodded, and Draco went to his wardrobe to find something to put the diary in. He dumped the contents of a wooden box on his bed, and then put the diary in it. “Here,” he said. “Get rid of it, and please don’t tell my father that you ever saw it.”

“Dobby not tell, Master Draco.” He took the box and popped out of the room. Draco sat down on the bed, and then lay on his back staring at the ceiling, feeling a sense of relief. He had no idea what spells were on the diary, but he had a feeling that it would be best if no one ever found it.

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Mithrael lay on his back in the Weasley apple orchard, watching his son and his friends play quidditch. His son’s talent on a broom amazed him. The Ron and the twins were good, also, and Ginny Weasley, though the youngest, was quite amazing.

He thought back on his son's reaction to meeting the pretty little red-haired girl. It was the first time that Seth had been attracted to a girl. He smiled, remembering how his son had tried to impress her, and how she had challenged him. Ginny had reached out, grabbed his son's heart, and wrapped it around her little finger. Mrs. Weasley had noticed it, also. She and Mithrael had shared a knowing look before she gave him a quick nod of approval.

Mithrael was not so sure that he was ready for his son to develop this sort of interest in the opposite sex. He had nothing against Ginny Weasley. It was that his son was too young. He would only be 12 at the end of the month, and Ginny was a year younger. He hoped that Seth would keep his wits about him when he was with her. Perhaps it was time to talk to him about such things. He had not expected to have to do it so soon.

As he went over in his mind how to approach the subject, he heard a faint pop. Turning his head, he saw a house elf standing nearby, gazing overhead at the flyers on their broomsticks. He sat up and turned toward the small elf. "Greetings, Little Brother," he said. "I am Lord Mithrael dina Lothair."

The house elf bowed very low, his forehead almost touching the ground. "Greetings, Lord Mithrael dina Lothair. I is Dobby, Master Malfoy's house elf. I is needing to see Harry Potter."

"Harry Potter is my son," Mithrael said. "I shall call him down to talk with you." He glanced up at his son, who was wrestling with Ginny over the snitch, and let out a loud, sharp whistle. Harry immediately snatched the golden ball out of the air between them and flew down to his father's side.

"What is it, Daka?" he asked, then turned his attention toward the elf and bowed. "Greetings Little Brother. I am Sethrael dina Mithrael."

"I is Dobby, and I needs to see Harry Potter," the little elf said urgently.

"I am Harry Potter," he said.

The elf looked closely, and when he saw the lightening bolt scar on his forehead, he nodded his head.

Dobby come to Harry Potter because he is Child of Prophecy. Dobby know the Great Harry Potter will know what to do.”

Harry frowned. “I’m sorry. I don’t understand. What is it that you want me to do?”

“Little Master tell Dobby to get rid of this,” he said, indicating a box in his hand. “This be very dangerous book belonging to Dark Lord. Must be placed where it can’ts be finded. Dobby think maybe in Elfin Realm the best place. Maybe the Great Harry Potter would tell Dobby if he will take it and destroy it.”

Harry reached out to take the box, but his father grabbed his arm, preventing him from touching it. “Can you open the box, Dobby?” Mithrael asked.

Dobby set the box on the ground, and then took off the top. Mithrael knelt beside it, examined it a moment, and then nodded. “We will take it with us to the Elven Realm,” he said. “Your little master was right to have you get rid of it. Should you find anything else with this kind of magic, please bring it to me or my son.”

Dobby bowed low, then popped out of sight.

“What is it, Daka?”

By now, the Weasley children had landed and were looking down at the box that the house elf had delivered. “It is a book that is possessed with the soul of the Dark Wizard,” Mithrael said, replacing the top on the box. “It is very dangerous. We will take it to the Elders and let them decide what must be done.”

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As Harry and his father walked through the forest of the Elven Realm, Mithrael decided it was as good a time as any to talk to his son about girls. “What did you think of Ginny Weasley?” he asked.

Harry grinned. "I liked her."

"Do you think she is pretty?"

"Pretty?" His son frowned, thinking for a moment. "I suppose she is. Why?"

"I thought that might have been why you liked her."

Harry shook his head. "No. Ron is not pretty, but I like him."

His father laughed.

"But Ginny, there is something different about her. It is like I know her, even though I have never met her before. She is—I know she is a girl, Daka, but I think she could be a hunter. I think she could use a bow and a sling. My mind saw her running through the forest as if she were part of it. She was like—like one of the magical animals that live there." He shook his head. "I do not know how to explain it."

Mithrael smiled, feeling a small amount of relief. He placed an arm around his son's shoulders. "You do not have to explain. I understand. You want her to be your friend."

Harry nodded. "Yes. I think she will understand me more than most people do because I think she is more like me than the others."

Mithrael nodded. "That is good. I am sure she will be a good friend, Seth."

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Harry dreamed of Ginny that night. He saw her looking out a window at Hogwarts. Behind her, in the shadows, a dark-robed figure was watching her. Beside the figure, a giant snake appeared. Its yellow eyes were reflected in the windowpane. When Ginny saw the reflection in the glass, she turned to stone. She fell backwards, and her body crumbled into ashes the way Quirrell's had when he touched Harry. The hooded figure and large snake disappeared.

Harry ran to the pile of ashes on the floor and knelt down. Within the thick gray pile, something stirred. A tiny head emerged and stared up at Harry with big cinnamon-colored eyes. It was a small bird. Harry gently scooped it out of the ashes and held it in his hand. Suddenly, the bird transformed into a tiny Ginny Weasley. She stared up at him, blinking her large brown eyes, then turned into a big red bird and flew away. "Ginny!" He called after her. "Ginny! Come back!"

"Seth!"

He felt someone shake his shoulder and opened his eyes. His father was looking down at him. "You've had a bad dream," he said.

Harry sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Yes," he said. "I'm sorry I woke you."

"It's all right, Sethrael," his mother said, lifting the furs in invitation. "Come lay by me."

Harry crawled out of his own furs and curled up against his mother. She wrapped an arm around him and stroked his hair with her other hand. His father draped an arm across both his wife and son. Harry slept the rest of the night wrapped safely in the arms of his parents.

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Beneath the branches of Eldartha, Queen Thespa and the Elders gathered. Mithrael set a box on the ground and removed the top, then backed away for the others to take a look.

After a few moments, Elder Kindarth spoke. "The Dark Wizard has committed the unthinkable. He has broken his very soul. This is why his spirit roams the Human Realm. He cannot be destroyed until the pieces of his soul are destroyed or reunited."

"If this piece is destroyed," Queen Thespa said. "Then all must be destroyed. We do not know if this is the only one or if he has divided his soul many times. If there are others, we would have to find each one and destroy it, also."

"If we do not destroy it, then we must reunite the parts," Elder Kasha said. "We do not have to find them all, or even know how many there are, to perform the ritual."

"But the ritual is both difficult and dangerous," Elder Gweneth said. "It must be performed in all three realms and cannot be interrupted until it is completed."

"And the boy Sethrael is the only one who can finish the ritual," Elder Sareth said. "And he is not yet ready."

"No, he is not," Queen Thespa agreed.

"We must stop the Dark Wizard from performing the ritual to put his broken soul into a new body," Elder Kasha said.

"But we do not know the ritual," Elder Gweneth said. "How can we stop him if we do not know how to prevent it?"

Queen Thespa turned to Mithrael. "You must go to the Human Realm and find my nephew. He has knowledge of dark rituals. Tell him I need to speak to him, and bring him to me."

Mithrael bowed. "My Queen, this book must not remain in our realm. It is causing my son to have dreams, and I believe that his being near it is harmful to him. May I take the book and hide it on the island in the Realm of El?"

"Placing it in the Realm of El may destroy it," Elder Kasha said.

"No," said Elder Sareth. "It will be safe on the island. It would be destroyed, however, if one were to try to carry it into the Summerland."

"Go and take the box to the Realm of El, Mithrael," Queen Thespa said. "But hide it well. And when you have returned, let the Elders know where you have hidden it."

"Yes, my Queen," Mithrael said, bowing. He placed the top on the box and carried it from the shade of Eldartha.

“We will meet again after I have spoken with my nephew,” Queen Thespa said.

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AN: Still working on Chapter 12. Will post it either late tonight or early tomorrow. MS

Chapter 12

"So, what you are saying," Lucius said. "Is that Queen Thespa sent you here to take me to the Elven Realm, and I'm to stop whatever I'm doing and go with you. Is that correct?"

"Yes," Mithrael said. "That is correct." He and Harry had been escorted into Lucius's study and were now sitting in front of the desk.

"May I go, too, Father?" Draco asked. He had been summoned when the Elves arrived and was sitting next to Harry.

Lucius ignored him. "I can't be at your queen's beck and call. I'm a busy man. I have things to do."

"She is your queen, also, Lucius," Mithrael said.

"She is not my queen! I am a Wizard!"

"You are half Elf, and Queen Thespa is not only your queen, but your mother's sister."

Harry turned to Draco in surprise. "That would make us cousins," he said softly, so as not to interrupt the adult conversation. "Queen Thespa is my grandmother."

"Really?" Draco asked.

"Draco," Lucius said irritably. "Why don't you show Harry the gardens? His father and I have things we need to discuss."

"Yes Father," Draco said, standing and motioning for Harry to follow him.

Harry glanced at his father for permission, and when he received a nod, followed Draco out of the study.

"What is it like there?" Draco asked as they made their way to the gardens.

Harry shrugged. "It's very different. The woods only have magical creatures, so we must go to the forests in the Human Realm to hunt for food."

Draco pointed to the quiver on his back. "You hunt with bows and arrows?"

"Yes, and a sling. I've been using a sling longer, so I'm better at that, but I'm getting quite good with my bow."

Outside, they walked through the garden until they came to a gazebo. Having more questions, Draco motioned for him to enter, then went in behind him. They sat on a bench facing each other. "What are those clothes you're wearing?" he asked. "What are they made of?"

Harry looked down at his tunic. "Oh, this is doe skin," he said rubbing his hand across the material. "It's very soft and flexible. It's also sturdy. It's good to wear for hunting and fishing and roaming the forests. The color allows us to blend into the forest and not be seen."

"Are your boots made of the same material?"

Harry nodded and propped an ankle on his knee to show him the sole. "They're much more comfortable than the boots we wear at Hogwarts," he said. "The sole protects the feet, but allows you to feel the ground underneath. They're also good for climbing trees. These are not waterproof, though. The ones we wear in winter are, and they're lined with fur. It's always warm in the Elven Realm, but when we go to the Human Realm in winter, it's cold and we need protection from the snow."

"When you first arrived at Hogwarts, you wore a gold crown. Is that because you're a prince?"

Harry nodded. "I only wear it for ceremonies or when I'm being presented formally. Also the clothes we wore that night are for the same. They're not everyday wear."

"So, you will be King some day?"

“No,” he said, shaking his head. “We don’t have a King. Someday, my mother will be Queen, and when I have a sister, she will be Queen after my mother.”

“What if you don’t have a sister? Who will become Queen after your mother?”

“If I don’t have a sister, then my daughter will one day be Queen. But I’m sure that I’ll have a sister. My parents plan to have another child now that I’m older and don’t require so much care.”

“My father told me that you bathe in the river and sleep on the ground. Is that true?”

Harry nodded. “We make a tent by tying ropes between trees and hanging skins over the ropes. It rains while we sleep, so we need the protection. And in the early morning, mists cover the forest, so we wait until the sun has cleared the mists before leaving the tents. It’s cool at night, so we sleep on top of skins and wrap ourselves in furs. It’s very comfortable.”

Draco frowned. “What about insects and spiders and snakes and things. Don’t they get in the tent?”

“We don’t have insects and spiders, and the only snakes we have are magical, but they don’t come inside the tent.”

“I wish I could see it,” Draco said wistfully. “Father said I wouldn’t last a day there because I’m used to being waited on by servants, but I believe I could handle it.”

Harry grinned. “You definitely would not be waited on there. We all have work to do so that all the people have food and skins and potions, but the work is not difficult. It’s fun. My father and I hunt every day and gather fruit, nuts, berries, wild vegetables, and plants for potions. Sometimes we make tools or weapons, but we also swim in the lake, fly on the backs of hippogriffs, and explore the forests. My mother and grandmother help the other women cook supper and sew, but my mother also makes amulets and potions, and she is a healer. At night, we gather with the others to eat. Afterwards, stories are told

or music is played. Sometimes we dance or sing; sometimes we just listen. Before supper, the younger children run around the cove, playing together. The older children play games, and the adults talk with each other. I love being there, but now I have lived in your world, and I see how different it is. I don't know if you would enjoy my world as much as I do."

"How do you get there? Do you walk?"

"From here, it's easy because your house is surrounded by woods. In every forest, there's a tree that serves as a portal into our world. It works the same as the barrier at King's Cross, the one that leads to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. But only Elves can open the one in the forest. Once the portal is opened, anyone can enter."

"I'm a quarter Elf. Would I be able to open it?"

Harry nodded. "I think so. I can open it, and I wasn't born an Elf. I became one through adoption, but it was a blood ritual, so I now have my parent's blood flowing through my veins, and they have mine. But I can't show you the portal without my father's permission."

Draco smirked. "Do you always do everything your father tells you?"

"Of course. Don't you?"

Draco looked as if he were about to protest, then made a wry face and nodded.

Harry laughed, and Draco joined him.

"Perhaps I could spend a day there," Draco said. "Maybe a few days."

Harry nodded. "You would be welcomed by our people. You are one of us, Draco. It would be good for you to learn of our world."

Dobby appeared in the gazebo with a loud pop. "Master Draco, Master Lucius says you is to put on dress robes. You is going to Elven Realm."

Draco jumped up excitedly. "I'm going?"

"Yes, Master Draco. You is going. Hurry now. Master is waiting."

"I'll go with you," Harry said, following Draco out of the gazebo.

Draco stopped and turned around. "I'm going to change clothes," he said pointedly.

Harry laughed. "If your father allows you to stay, you will undress and bathe in front of others. If you're too shy, you'll get very dirty, Draco, and my mother won't allow you into your furs until you are clean."

Draco huffed. "Come on, then."

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Beneath the branches of Eldartha, Queen Thespa and the Elders sat gazing at their visitors. Lucius Malfoy, and his son Draco, stood with Mithrael and Sethrael, waiting for the Queen to speak.

The Queen rose and went to stand before Draco. She took his face gently between her hands. "You have the look of my sister," she said, smiling softly. "Your grandmother would have been very pleased to see you in our Realm. She had hoped for the day you would learn about your people."

"I never knew her," Draco said.

"No, she crossed into the Summerland before you were born, but she knew you would come. She dreamed of you often."

She turned to Harry. "Sethrael, take your cousin to the caves and help him find something more suitable to wear. He will be our guest for a few days." She looked up at Lucius. "You do not mind if your son visits his people for a while, do you, Nephew?"

"No, Aunt Thespa," Lucius said stiffly.

She smiled and waved her hands in a shooing motion, sending the two boys off to the caves. When they were gone, she sat. "Please, be seated," she said to the two men who were still standing.

Lucius looked around and saw that there were no seats other than smooth boulders or the ground. He took out his wand and conjured a chair. The Elves laughed as he sat down.

"You truly are a Wizard, Nephew," Queen Thespa said.

"Yes, well, I'm no longer accustomed to nature, Aunt Thespa," he replied.

"Lucius, we have a problem, and we need your help," she said. "We have discovered how the Dark Wizard's soul has remained in the Human Realm."

Lucius brows rose. "So, he's not dead?"

"No. He searches for a way to create a new body. He is unable to completely possess a person, as you saw with the Professor Quirrell at Hogwarts."

"That was the Dark Lord? He's the one who possessed Quirrell?"

"Yes, but he could not take over the Professor completely, although he could control him."

"What is it you want me to do?" Lucius asked warily.

"He is searching for a servant to perform a ritual. It will be a dark ritual. I would like for you to find the kind of ritual that will create a new body that his soul can enter. I know that you have access to this kind of information since you have used the Dark Arts yourself."

He frowned. "Why do you want this ritual? What do you plan to do with it? Surely, you don't want to help him."

"No, we want to prevent it, but until we know which ritual he is likely to use, we can do nothing. Will you help us?"

Lucius jumped up and began to pace in agitation. "You put me in a precarious situation," he said. "I was one of his followers. If he even suspected that I was helping you, my family would be tortured and killed."

"Do you wish for the Dark Wizard's return, Lucius? Do you wish to follow him again?"

"No! I'd rather die than kneel to that monster again, but I have to protect my family!"

"The only way you can protect your family is by preventing his return. We ask nothing more from you than that you help us find this ritual. After that, the problem will be ours. We will ask nothing more of you."

He stopped pacing for a moment and glared at his aunt. "And he will never know that I helped you?"

"Not unless you tell him yourself."

He sighed and sat back down. "Then I will find this ritual for you, but promise me that if he finds out that I helped you, you will protect my wife and son."

"You have our promise," Queen Thespa said. "But, Lucius, you must trust in the prophecy. You must have faith in the beliefs of your people."

"Faith!" he spat. "I have learned to put my faith in only one thing, Aunt Thespa: power. That is a lesson I learned from my father."

"Your father was a poor teacher, and an even poorer man. Oh, yes, he had wealth and power, but he had none of the qualities that make a man great, Lucius. If you follow his example, you are a fool."

Lucius gave her an icy glare. "I am worse than a fool," he said. "I am a coward. I couldn't even save my mother."

"You were a child. You did everything you could."

"I failed!"

"You blame yourself for something you could not control, and you are punishing yourself by trying to become the man he was. Why, Lucius? If you want to punish anyone, punish the man who hurt you by becoming the thing he hated most."

Lucius stood. "I will find this ritual for you, and I will bring it to you when I come to retrieve my son. I don't think he will stay longer than a day, but if I am wrong, please keep him safe."

"I will guard him with my life," Mithrael said, standing. "But you know that no harm can come to him in our realm."

"I know, but I also know that you roam the human realm, so when you do, please keep him safe."

"I will," Mithrael said. He bowed to the Queen and Elders, and then escorted Lucius back to the portal.

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"Aya, a coseth isa?" Harry shouted into the mouth of the cave. The words echoed back to him. "Come on," he said, leading Draco inside.

"What did you say?" Draco asked.

"I just asked if anyone was here. Sometimes, people come in to get new clothes, and they change inside the cave. I did not want to walk in on a woman."

Draco nodded. "So, I'm going to be dressed like you?"

"Yes. Your robes will get damaged here, so you'll want something more comfortable."

At the back of the cave, hundreds of baskets of all sizes were lined in front of the walls. "What are in all these baskets?" Draco asked.

“Furs, skins, boots, clothes, vegetables, fruits, nuts, berries, gold, silver, metal, precious stones, flint, tools, weapons, and all the other things that our people need.”

“So, if you need new clothes, you just come into the cave and pick some out?”

Harry nodded, taking the top off one of the baskets. He reached in and pulled out a tunic. “I think this will fit,” he said, handing it to Draco.

Draco took the tunic. “Where will I put the clothes I’m wearing?”

“Fold them, and we’ll put them in one the baskets. They’ll be safe here. You can get them before you leave.”

Draco removed his robe, folded it, and laid it on top of one of the baskets. “Do you wear the same clothes every day?”

“Yes,” Harry said, pulling a pair of trousers from another basket. “But you wash them every day when you bathe in the river.”

Draco shrugged and removed the rest of his clothes. “What about underwear?” he asked.

Harry grinned and handed him a leather belt. “We do not wear underwear, but if you want, you can wear what you have and wash them at the river when you bathe at night.”

“No, that’s okay. I’ll wear whatever the rest of you do.” He put on the trousers and laced up the front. “These are comfortable,” he said.

“Wait until you put these on,” Harry said, handing him a pair of boots. “You’ll never want to put on another pair. I’ve been thinking of asking Metha if she will make me a pair for school, but dye them black so that they’ll look more like the ones we wear with our uniforms.”

Draco put on the boots and laced them to his knees. He stood up and walked around the cave, testing them. “It’s almost as if you’re not wearing anything,” he said. “I can feel the earth beneath my feet.”

Harry nodded. "It may seem strange at first, but you will get used to them and not want to wear anything else."

Draco had finished dressing when someone called into the cave. "Aya, a coseth isa?"

"Ta, Daka!" Harry answered. "Casa isa!"

Mithrael and Lucius entered the cave. "Draco, your father is leaving and wants to say goodbye," Mithrael said. He motioned for Harry to follow him out of the cave.

Draco looked up at his father who was looking over his outfit, a slight smile on his face. "Is it all right, Father?" he asked.

Lucius nodded. "I was just thinking about when I was your age," he said, then shook his head. "Draco, if you will allow yourself, you will have a wonderful time here. This is the best place for a boy to learn to become a man. If you will listen, you will learn many valuable lessons. For these few days, forget you are a Wizard and learn to be an Elf. It is something you will carry with you for the rest of your life."

Draco had never heard his father speak so emotionally. "Yes, Father," he said. "I'll make you proud of me."

Lucius smiled. "I am already proud of you, son." He cleared his throat and his entire demeanor changed into the more formal one that Draco was used to. "I will inform your mother that you are here. Listen to what you're told and obey Mithrael, Elsbeth and the Queen. She is your aunt, Draco. Get to know her. She will tell you stories of your grandmother."

"I will, Father."

His father nodded and allowed his eyes to roam over his son once more. "I will come for you in a few days," he said, and walked out of the cave.

Chapter 13

"You sleep naked?" he asked in horror. This was too much. He had been a sport about all the rest of it. He had bathed in the river, washing his clothes, hair, and body with the same bar of soap. After the bath, there was no way to slick his hair back, so he was unable to keep the hair out of his eyes, so Mithrael had tied a thin strip of leather around his forehead. He had eaten some sort of meat at supper he did not recognize, and although it and the strange vegetables were delicious, he was afraid to ask what it was. He had gotten sunburned after he and Harry had gotten hot and spent most of the day wearing nothing but trousers and boots. Elsbeth had spread a salve on his sunburn, which had healed it immediately, and for the first time in his life, Draco noticed that his skin had begun to tan. But sleeping naked in a tent with a woman, even if she was his cousin, was more than he could handle.

"Do not worry, Draco," Elsbeth said gently. "It is dark, and I cannot see you."

"But what about in the morning when it's light?"

"I will keep my eyes closed until you are dressed," she said. "Please do not be upset, Draco. It is the way of our people. We are not embarrassed by nudity the way the Wizards are."

"But aren't we a little old to be sleeping with Harry's parents?"

"Children stay in their parents' tents until they are married, and then they have their own with their new family."

Draco sighed.

"That is enough talk," Mithrael said. "Draco, remove your clothes and wrap up in your furs. Elsbeth will not see you. It is time to sleep, now."

Draco sat down and removed his clothes, then crawled into his furs.

"Goodnight, Draco," Harry said.

“Goodnight,” he answered softly.

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A week later, Lucius sat before the Queen and Elders in a conjured chair under the branches of Eldartha. “I found three rituals that would give the Dark Lord a body,” he said. “But two of them, he would never use. They require him to possess the body of a dead Wizard, and he fears nothing more than death. He would never touch anything dead. I have written the ritual that he is most likely to use on this parchment.” He handed it to the Queen who looked over it.

“He will need someone to help him. Who do you think he will choose?”

“He would prefer to use either Severus Snape, who is a potions master, or my sister-in-law, Bellatrix Lestrange. However, Severus has admitted to working for the Light as a spy and Bellatrix is in Azkaban. He would have to find a way to get her out, and I’m not sure that’s possible. So, I believe he will come to me.”

“It says here that you would have to sacrifice a portion of your own flesh as part of the ritual,” the Queen said.

“Yes, and I don’t intend to do that, Aunt Thespa, so I hope that you will come up with a solution before he comes to me.”

“I do not know if our solution will save you, Lucius. It is time for you to make your choice known.”

“I can’t,” he said, shaking his head. “I can’t risk my family. He will destroy all who betrayed him.”

“I fear you will regret that decision,” she said. “When you return home, make sure your son and wife know where the portal is that leads to our world. Show Draco how to open it so that he and his mother can come through if they need our protection.”

"I will, Aunt Thespa," he said. He stood and banished the chair he had conjured. "I will find my son, and then we will go back to our world."

The Queen smiled. "You did not think he would stay this long, did you?"

"No, I didn't."

"He has enjoyed his time here. The first two days were difficult for him, but he adjusted quickly. I believe that he will want to come back to visit more often. I hope you will allow it."

"Thank you, Aunt Thespa. I will allow him to come whenever he wishes." He bowed, and then left to look for his son.

The Queen turned to her Elders. "We will need help from the Wizarding World. I will have Mithrael contact Sethrael's godfathers and the long-bearded one."

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Lucius watched his son run out of the forest, accompanied by his cousin. Their tunics had been wrapped around their waists, and their bare chests, arms, and faces were smudged with dirt. Draco's skin was brown and his cheeks were flushed. His hair had been bleached white by the sun and was held out of his eyes by a leather band wrapped around his forehead. His light eyes shone like crystal against the tanned skin. They were each carrying a leather bag filled with nuts and racing toward the cave, both laughing with abandon.

When they saw him, they stopped and stared at him with dread.

"Have you come to take me home?" Draco asked softly.

Lucius nodded. "It's time, Draco. There are only two more weeks left before school begins, and there's much to do."

Draco nodded. "We have to take these to the cave," he said. "And I need to get my clothes."

“Go, then,” Lucius said. “I’ll wait by the portal.”

The two boys moved at a much slower and sadder pace toward the cave.

“It’ll be all right, Draco,” Harry said, emptying his bag into one of the baskets. “You’ll come back next summer, maybe for longer than a week next time.”

Draco took his clothes out of the basket. “I should have washed these before I returned them,” he said, looking down at the clothes he’d been wearing for the past week.

“No, they’re yours,” Harry said. “Take them home. You can wear them when you play in the woods or practice riding your broom.”

Draco’s eyes lit up. “I’ll wear them home, then. Mother can see what I look like as an elf.” He untied the arms of his tunic from around his waist and slipped it over his head.

“Don’t forget to practice with your sling,” Harry said. “Next year, you might be able to beat me.”

The two headed out of the cave and met Lucius near the portal. Harry watched sadly as Draco followed his father out of the Elven Realm.

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“Why are you sitting here looking sad?” Mithrael asked his son that afternoon. Harry sat on the grass beside the lake, tossing stones into the water.

“I’m sad for Draco,” he said. “He didn’t want to go home.”

Mithrael sat down beside him. “He will come back next year, Seth. It is almost time to go to Hogwarts. In fact, tomorrow, your godfathers are taking you to the Wizard Village in London to shop for your school books.”

Harry brightened. "I'm going, too?"

"Yes. And tomorrow afternoon, I will meet you and your godfathers at Hogwarts. We have something important to do tomorrow night."

"What is it, Daka?"

"It is a secret," his father said mischievously. "You will have to wait and see, but it is very important." His father stood up and started removing his clothes. "I think I will have a swim before supper," he said.

Harry got up, stripped off his clothes, and followed his father into the lake.

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Harry had his own bedroom at Remus's house in which he kept his school trunk, Wizarding robes, and the Muggle clothes that Sirius insisted on buying him. There was no place in the Elven Realm for them, except for the cave, and since Harry didn't need them when he was home, they all thought it best that he left them with his godfathers.

When Harry arrived, he changed into a pair of Muggle jeans, a tee shirt, a light jacket, and a pair of socks and trainers. Remus brushed his hair back into a long ponytail and bound it at the nape of his neck with an elastic band. When he was ready, they used the fireplace to floo to Diagon Alley.

Harry had never been to the Wizarding Village before. His godfathers had shopped for him before his first year at Hogwarts, so he was amazed to see the sight that met his eyes after the bricks behind the Leaky Cauldron formed an archway leading into the village. "Bloody hell!" he said, using a term he had learned from Ron the year before.

His godfathers laughed. "Come on," Sirius said. "Let's finish the shopping, then we can have some fun."

Remus had to hold Harry's arm to prevent him from walking into people as he craned his neck to look inside every store window.

By lunchtime, they had completed their shopping. Remus had lightened the bags so they were easier to carry. "Let's go to Fortesques for ice cream," Sirius suggested. "Then we'll look around a bit more."

Remus and Harry agreed and walked toward the ice cream parlor.

"Harry!"

Harry turned to see Ron and Hermione running toward him. Hermione almost bowled him over when she ran into him to give him a hug.

"It's so good to see you, Harry! How was your summer?"

"Brilliant," he said, patting her back. "How was yours?"

"Wonderful!" she said, stepping away from him. "Paris was beautiful." She turned to his godfathers. "Hello, Professor Black and Mr. Lupin."

"Hello, Hermione, Ron," Remus said.

"Would you two like to join us for ice cream?" Sirius asked.

"Sure," Ron said.

"I'd love to," Hermione said.

At Fortesques, they sat outside at a table with a large umbrella over it and waited for Mr. Fortesque to take their order.

Harry looked around at all the people passing. "This is the most brilliant place I've ever seen," he said, using another expression he had learned from Ron. And then he saw Draco walking by with his parents.

"Draco!" he called.

His cousin turned and grinned at him. "Hi, cousin!"

"Come join us!"

Draco started toward Harry, but his mother grabbed his arm, stopping him. His father whispered something to her, and she let him go.

"Wait here, and I will see you after we finish at the apothecary," his father said.

Draco nodded and joined the others.

"Hello, Draco," Sirius said.

"Hello, Professor Black."

"You're not in school, Draco. You can call me Cousin Sirius."

Draco laughed and greeted the others.

"Draco's your cousin?" Ron asked Harry.

Harry nodded. "Queen Thespa, my grandmother, is Draco's great aunt."

"So, you're an Elf?" Hermione asked Draco.

"Yes, but I didn't know it until the end of last school year. This summer, I spent a week in the Elven Realm getting to know my family. Next year, my father said I could stay longer."

Ron looked like he was about to cry. Harry nudged him with his elbow. "Do you think your mum would let you come visit, Ron? There are two weeks before school starts."

Ron brightened. "I'll ask her," he said.

Their ice cream order arrived, and everyone began to eat. Draco turned to Ron and grinned. "You'll love the Elven Realm," he said.

“But the first couple of days were hard for me. I had to get used to doing things I’d never done before, but after that, it was great.”

Ron frowned. “Like what?”

But before Draco could answer, Theodore Nott and Pansy Parkinson stopped at their table. “What are you doing sitting with half-bloods, mud-bloods, and blood-traitors?” he asked with a smirk on his face.

Ron’s face turned red, and he started to stand, but Remus placed a hand on his arm to stop him.

Draco looked up at his fellow Slytherins. “I’m having ice cream with my family,” he said. “Would you like to join us?”

“Family!” Nott spat.

Draco nodded. “Yes, Professor Black is my cousin on my mother’s side, and Harry Potter is my cousin on my father’s side.”

“The elf?” he said, laughing.

“Yes, Nott. I’m sitting with my own kind. Now, kindly join us or go away.”

“But, Draco,” Pansy whined. “You’re a pureblood.”

“I thought I was, but I found out last year that I’m part Elf. I spent part of the summer in the Elven Realm getting to know my family. I’ve found that I’m quite proud of that part of my heritage.”

“Half-blood!” Nott spat and steered Pansy away from the table. Draco nonchalantly waved to them and took another bite of his ice cream.

“What?” he asked, when he noticed the others were staring at him.

Sirius grinned. “I’ve never been so proud to claim you as my cousin,” he said. “Congratulations, Draco. You’ve just joined the Black List of the Black Family.”

Draco snorted. “I know,” he said. “My mother’s going to kill me.”

Chapter 14

That afternoon, Mithrael, Harry, Sirius, and Remus sat in Albus Dumbledore's office discussing the return of Voldemort.

"We have found the ritual we believe he will use to come back," Mithrael said, handing the parchment to the headmaster. "We can do nothing about the other items he will need, but if we could find the grave of his father, we could at least remove the bones."

Albus read over the ritual, then nodded. "The bones would have to be destroyed," he said. "We can't risk his finding them. Are you sure this is the ritual he'll use?"

"There are two others, but both require him to possess the body of a dead Wizard. We have learned that Voldemort fears death and will not touch anything dead, so we believe that the other rituals would be repulsive to him."

"They would, but if it is the only way, he might disregard his revulsion."

"He might," Mithrael said. "But not until he realizes that his first attempt has failed. That would give us more time."

Albus nodded. "I agree."

"We should do this immediately," Mithrael said. "We cannot allow him to retrieve the bones before we have destroyed them. But we must find the grave of his father."

"I've been to his father's grave," Albus said. "It's in the family graveyard at Riddle Manor in Little Hangleton."

"Then, we must go tonight," Mithrael said.

Albus nodded. "We'll go at a time when it's least likely we'll be discovered." He looked at Remus. "The moon is nearly full tonight, just another two days. We'll go at midnight."

The others agreed.

“We will meet you near the half-giant’s hut at half past eleven,” Mithrael said.

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Dinner at the Malfoy table that evening was the most unpleasant that Draco had ever experienced. His mother was angry that he had told Pansy Parkinson and Theodore Nott that he was part Elf, and his parents had been arguing ever since.

"You knew what I was before you married me!" his father shouted.

“Yes, but you agreed to keep it secret. Your father never told anyone about his relationship with your mother. Everyone thought that his wife was your real mother. If my family ever found out . . .”

“Your family is dead, Narcissa, except for your sister who is married to a Muggle-born and your cousin who turned his back on the Black family.”

“Bella is not dead!”

“She’s been in Azkaban for 11 years. She may as well be dead.”

“All our friends . . .”

“We don’t have friends, Narcissa. We have acquaintances that you can barely tolerate.”

"I don't want them turning their noses up at me for marrying a half-blood."

“But you did marry a half-blood!”

She threw a crystal water goblet at him, ran upstairs, and locked herself in her room.

Fortunately for him, Lucius had seen it coming and had dodged the goblet. He sighed and looked at his son. "Happy now?"

Draco shook his head. "I'm sorry, Father. I didn't mean to cause problems between you and Mother."

"Draco, what possessed you to tell your friends that you were part Elf?"

Draco shrugged. "I don't know. I guess I just didn't want to lie about who I am, Father." He looked at his father, his expression begging him to understand. "I don't want to pretend to be something I'm not. I'm proud of being part Elf. I wish . . . I wish you were proud of it, too."

Lucius sighed. "I am proud of it, Draco, it's just . . ." He shook his head. "Draco, I've had to lie about who I was all my life. My father was a pureblood Wizard who was ashamed to have an Elven son. And, yet, because I was his only heir, he took me from my mother and raised me as a Wizard."

"Why?" Draco asked. "If Grandfather hated Elves so badly, why did he have a child by her?"

"I don't know, Draco. He may have loved her once," he said. "When he was a young man, he was injured in a duel and left for dead in the forest behind the manor. My mother found him and nursed him back to health. By the time he recovered, they had become lovers. Of course, his parents had already arranged a marriage for him, so even though he knew she was carrying a child, he couldn't marry her, so he left.

"After two years of marriage, they discovered that my stepmother couldn't bear children, so he went to my mother and asked her to allow him to take me back to the Wizarding world. She agreed, but I was only to stay half a year in the Wizarding world. I was to spend the other half in the Elven Realm. My father agreed to the arrangement, and that is the way it was for eight years. Then, a year before I was to go to Hogwarts, he refused to allow me to go back, so she came for me. He tried to send her away, but she refused to leave without me. He locked her in the dungeon and starved her to death. I tried to help

her by sneaking food down to her, and once I even tried to steal the key to her cell, but he caught me and beat me until I couldn't move. Even then, when Aunt Thespa came to our house, I tried to sneak her into the dungeon, but again I was caught. My father beat me so badly that I almost died. By the time I recovered, my mother was dead.

"After she died, he told me that I was no longer an Elf, and that I was never to tell anyone that I was not a pureblood Wizard. People were to believe that my stepmother was my mother, and if I did not do as he said, he would do to me what he did to my mother."

"You must have hated him," Draco said.

Lucius nodded. "And, yet, I became just like him."

Draco frowned. "Why do say that, Father? You're not at all like him."

Lucius pushed up the left sleeve of his robe, exposing the dark mark. "I became as bigoted as he was," he said. "Only more so. At least, he never became a Death Eater."

"But you were under the Imperius."

His father shook his head. "I joined the Dark Lord to prove myself to my father, but he died before I could tell him what I had done." He laughed mirthlessly. "And then I was stuck following a madman until he was vanquished by a baby. When questioned, I told the Wizengamot that I had been under the Imperius curse so that I wouldn't have to go to Azkaban."

"Does Mother know?"

He nodded. "She knew all along, but she kept my secret. Of course, she was never a Death Eater, Draco. She hated the Dark Lord."

"I'm sorry, Father."

"You have nothing to be sorry for, son. It is I who should be apologizing to you, but I can't, Draco, because I know that you would forgive me, and I don't deserve your forgiveness."

Draco stood up and went to his father. After a brief moment of hesitation, he leaned down and hugged him for the first time since he was a small child. "You have it anyway, Father," he said, then released him and sat down beside him. "That's why Mother's so angry, isn't it? She's not concerned about being snubbed. She's afraid the Dark Lord will come back and find out that you're a half blood and kill you for it, isn't she?"

Lucius nodded. "It's not just me. He will kill us all, Draco, because he will see me as a traitor and want to punish me before he kills me. He'll do it by making me watch him torture and then murder my family."

"I could tell Pansy and Nott that I lied," he said.

His father shook his head. "It's too late for that. The best we can do is to try to find a way to prevent him from coming back."

“Is that possible?”

“The Elves are looking for a solution. They believe it is possible.”

Draco sighed. "I hope they find one."

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Harry had never been afraid of death. Elves rarely died, but he knew that his parents had, and he had watched Professor Quirrell become nothing but a pile of ashes. Yet, he was not afraid of crossing into the Summerland where he would live with his parents and others who had crossed over.

He had never been afraid of ghosts. Elves did not tell stories of ghosts or monsters in the circle, so he had never seen one until he entered Hogwarts or even heard of their existence. The ghosts were friendly, except for the mischievous poltergeist named Peeves, but even he was not scary.

And, yet, when the headmaster opened the squeaky iron gate that led into the Riddle graveyard, Harry felt a chill run down his spine and the hair rise on the back of his neck. Above the fog that covered the ground, strange statues stood guarding the grave. Skeletal figures in hooded robes holding long-handled sickles loomed over them.

“What are those creatures?” he asked, pointing to one of the figures.

“It is the Muggle’s representation of Death,” Dumbledore said.

Harry moved closer to his father. “It’s not very comforting, is it?”

“No, it is not,” Dumbledore answered. “But it’s human nature to fear the unknown, and many people fear death because they don’t know what happens afterward. However, I have always thought of it as the next great adventure. I see no reason to fear it.”

At last, they came to the grave of Tom Riddle. Harry wondered how they were going to remove the bones since none of them had brought shovels. His question was soon answered.

Dumbledore whipped out his wand and waved it over the grave. The dirt rose into the air, and then landed in a neat pile beside the open grave. Harry looked down into the grave and saw a metal coffin.

Dumbledore waved his wand again, and the coffin rose from the grave and settled gently in the graveyard. Another wave opened the coffin lid and a final one banished the remains of Tom Riddle.

“Where did it go?” Harry asked.

“Into oblivion, Harry,” Dumbledore said. “Into nothingness. The remains of Tom Riddle no longer exist.”

Mithrael wrapped his arm around his son’s shoulders. “Yet his soul has not been affected,” he said. “It remains free and happy in the Summerland.”

Harry smiled at his father, and Dumbledore gave his wand a few more waves, closing the coffin, setting it back into the grave, restoring

the dirt, and putting the grass in order so that no one could tell that the grave had been disturbed. "There, now. I think that should do it," he said.

Suddenly, a light appeared in the distance. The movement of the lantern made it obvious that someone was walking toward them. "You there!" an old man shouted. "What are you doing here?"

"I think it is time to take our leave," Dumbledore said. "I'll meet you outside the gates of Hogwarts." He took Harry's arm and disappeared them. Remus grabbed Mithrael, and they disappeared from the graveyard.

"What's going on here?" the caretaker asked, approaching Sirius. "Where are the others?"

"There's nothing going on here," Sirius said. "We're just ghosts." He disappeared, leaving the Muggle caretaker shaking with fright.

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Rather than return home so late at night, Harry and his father spent the night with Remus and Sirius. Instead of sharing the bed in Harry's room, they took blankets downstairs and slept on the floor in front of the fire. Harry knew he would have to get used to a bed again, once he returned to school, but for now, he enjoyed the comfort of the floor.

At breakfast, Sirius regaled them with his version of the caretaker's meeting with the ghost. It was nothing like what actually happened, but Sirius's exaggeration made for a very good story.

After breakfast, Harry and his father arrived at the Burrow to ask if Ron could spend a few days in the Elven Realm. Mrs. Weasley finally relented, and Ron followed the Elves through the portal. Unlike Draco, he did not need a few days to adjust. For Ron, it was an adventure unparalleled by anything he had experienced before. He loved bathing in the river, sleeping in the tent, and roaming the magical forest. He loved the rides on the hippogriffs and trying his hand at the sling and bow. He enjoyed hunting with Harry and Mithrael, but his favorite part was after supper when everyone gathered to hear the

stories. This was the part that reminded him of home. When the week was over, it was with reluctance that Ron returned to the Burrow for the last week of summer.

Harry spent the last week at home near his parents. He would miss them, even though he looked forward to another year at Hogwarts. But three and a half months was a long time to be away from the love and comfort of home.

Chapter 15
August, 1994

It was still dark when Harry felt someone shake his shoulder. "Seth!" his father whispered. "It is time. Try not to wake your methara. She did not sleep well last night."

Harry sat up, still drowsy, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. "I'm up," he whispered, then grabbed his clothes and began to get dressed.

"You do not have to be so quiet," his mother said. "I am not asleep."

Mithrael lit a candle in the tent and knelt down beside his wife. "Do you still feel ill?" he asked, gently stroking her stomach. "I will stay if you need me."

"No," she said, smiling at him. "Go and enjoy the time with our son. He will return to school in two weeks, and you will miss spending time with him while he is gone."

"But I worry about you," Mithrael said, leaning over and kissing her forehead.

She gently stroked his face. "It is not unusual to feel ill when one is carrying a child," she said. "It is new for us, but those who have carried other children do not worry about the illness. Do not worry, my husband. My methara will be with me today, and you will be back tomorrow."

"And your dakara knows how to find me in case I am needed," Mithrael said, taking her hand and kissing it. "If you need me, I will come immediately."

Harry crawled over to his mother and kissed her cheek. "When my sister arrives, I will scold her for making you lose sleep, Metha," he said.

"I do not think so," she said, smiling at him. "By the time she utters her first cry, she will have the two of you wrapped around her little finger. The scolding will be left to me while the two of you spoil her."

Harry shook his head sadly. "Then she will have to go to Elder Kasha to learn the lesson of the spoiled child Kenda."

His mother's eyes widened, but before she could protest, Harry and Mithrael hurried out of the tent laughing.

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Wrapped in their forest green cloaks, dressed in deerskin from neck to toe, and carrying their bows and quivers on their backs, the two elves stepped through the portal and into the woods behind the Burrow.

Arthur, the twins, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny had almost reached the tree when they saw Harry and Mithrael waiting for them.

“Are we late?” Arthur asked, trying to catch up with the children who had run ahead to meet the Elves.

“No,” Mithrael said. “We have just arrived.”

Mithrael had refused to take a portkey; he had convinced Arthur to allow him to take them through the portal into the woods near the moor where the Quidditch World Cup would be held.

“Where are Sirius and Remus?” Ron asked. “I thought they were coming with you.”

“They went yesterday to set up the tent,” Harry said. “Uncle Sirius wanted to get there before the others to pick out the best camping spot.”

“Are you sure there will be enough room for all of us?” Arthur asked.
“We have three other sons who are coming later.”

“I have not seen the tent,” Mithrael said, “But Remus said there was room for twenty people to stay comfortably, and we are but thirteen.” He opened the portal and everyone followed him through.

When the others arrived, they were amazed by Sirius's tent. Harry, Mithrael, nor Hermione had ever seen a Wizarding tent before, but those who had were just as impressed.

“This is a hundred times bigger than your house, Uncle Remus,” Harry said. “You and Uncle Sirius should set this up in your woods and live in here.”

Sirius grinned and nudged Remus who just shook his head.

When breakfast was over, the adults sat outside under the shade trees while the younger ones went to explore the area. Sirius gave each of them ten galleons to spend on souvenirs. “Only buy fun things,” he said. “I’ve already got each of you a pair of omnioculars for the match.”

After thanking Sirius, the teenagers ran off to explore and spend their money.

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By lunch, Bill, Charley, and Percy had arrived. The teenagers returned wearing green rosettes, tall green sequined hats and large shamrock-shaped sunglasses. Hermione mumbled something that sounded like “Elton John concert,” but the purebloods had no idea what she was talking about. They had brought several friends with them. Lee Jordan, Oliver Wood, Seamus Finnigan, Dean Thomas, Neville Longbottom, Draco Malfoy, and a girl in Ginny’s year, Luna Lovegood, were invited to stay for lunch. The huge table in the dining room was piled high with sandwiches, chips, biscuits, cakes, and butterbeer.

Harry sat down beside his father and grinned up at him, still wearing his souvenirs. Mithrael snorted and shook his head.

“I was going to buy you some, Daka, but I knew you wouldn’t wear them.”

there were no longer any lights leading through the forest. He turned to the others. "Ron, hold on to the back of my belt and don't let go. Everyone, take someone's hand, and we'll go into the forest in a straight line." As Harry removed an arrow from his quiver and notched it into his bow, Ron grabbed his belt with one hand and Hermione's hand with the other. Hermione grabbed George's hand, who clasped Ginny's, and she held onto Fred's. "All right. Let's go."

Harry led the small group into the dark forest, and then lit his wand to look for the tree that was the portal. Suddenly they heard the pop of apparition. "Nox," Harry whispered, and the group moved quietly into the bushes.

A black-robed man with a white mask appeared in the forest. He pointed his wand skyward and shouted, "MORSMORDRE!" and a green light lit the forest.

"It's a Death Eater," whispered Ron. "He just conjured the Dark Mark!"

Harry raised his bow and let the arrow fly. The man screamed as the arrow hit his thigh. He fell on the ground, writhing in pain. Harry waved his hand, and the man's wand leapt out of his hand and into Harry's. He waved it again, and the man was bound from his shoulders to his ankles with thick ropes.

Harry stepped from behind the bushes and moved cautiously toward the man. A second pop made him hesitate. There, beside the Death Eater, stood a female house-elf.

"What are you doing, Little Sister?" Harry asked.

She turned around, startled. When she saw Harry, she fell on her knees and began to cry. "Y-you is Harry Potter," she said. "The Child of Prophecy."

He nodded. "I am. And what is your name, Little Sister?" he asked as he walked slowly toward her.

"I-I is Winky, Master Crouch's house-elf. I is come to take Little Master home."

"Is this your Little Master?" he asked, nodding to the bound Death Eater.

"Yes, Harry Potter, sir," she said, trembling with emotion.

Harry approached her and knelt down in front of her, reaching out and placing his hand on her shoulder. "Do you know the Prophecy of El, Winky?" he asked.

She nodded, tears streaming down her face.

"Do you see what your Little Master is wearing?"

Again she nodded miserably.

"I cannot allow you to take him away, Winky," he said gently. "You must leave him here with me."

She began to sob. "Please don't hurt him, Harry Potter, sir."

"I promise I won't hurt him, Winky. Now, go home before Master Crouch finds you here."

She popped away, leaving the Death Eater behind.

Harry stood, torn about what to do. He had promised his father to get the Weasleys home safely, and yet he had captured this Death Eater and did not want to leave him. He looked up at the others. "Should we leave him here or take him with us?" he asked.

Suddenly, the air was filled with popping, and they found themselves surrounded by wizards. "Who conjured that mark?" one of them asked.

"He did," they all said, pointing to the Death Eater on the ground.

“And this is his wand,” Harry added, giving it to the man who seemed to be in charge.

“And who are you?” the man asked.

“I am Harry Potter, and these are my friends, Fred, George, Ron, and Ginny Weasley, and Hermione Granger.”

“Who are you?” Ron asked. “Are you aurors?”

“Yes,” the man said. “I am Kingsley Shacklebolt of the auror division.”

Suddenly, Mr. Weasley, Sirius, Remus, and Mithrael ran into the area.

“Stop! Stop!” Mr. Weasley cried. “Those are my children!”

“Well, Arthur, your children have captured a Death Eater,” Shacklebolt said, grinning at Mr. Weasley.

Harry went to his father. “I’m sorry, Dada, but he appeared before we got to the portal.”

His father placed his hand on his son’s shoulder. “You did well, Sethrael. I am proud of you.”

One of the aurors bent over the prisoner and removed his mask. “Bloody hell! I thought you were dead!”

Auror Shacklebolt went over to take a look at the Death Eater. “Barty Crouch?” he asked in amazement.

“Are we free to leave, Kingsley?” Arthur asked.

“I just need to ask a couple of questions, but I suppose that can wait until tomorrow. Yeah, Arthur, go ahead and take your kids home. I’ll come by sometime tomorrow.”

he needs to know,” she said. “He does not have to go to Hogwarts to learn to be a Wizard.”

His father had approached Harry to talk with him about his mother’s request. “You have lived 14 summers,” he said. “The choice is yours, Seth, but your methara is sick with worry.”

Harry had been miserable. He did not want his mother to worry, but he wanted to return to Hogwarts and go to school with his friends. At last, he sat down to talk with his mother.

“Metha,” he said. “I know that you are worried about me. However, I wish to return to school this year. If, however, I sense danger, I will go to Uncle Sirius and Uncle Remus and have them escort me to the portal in the Forbidden Forest. I will not stay if I am in danger. I swear it.”

“But, my son, danger approaches most often without warning.”

“But Professor Dumbledore has said that Hogwarts is the safest place in the Wizarding World.”

“And, yet, Professor Quirrell brought the Dark Wizard into the school your first year, Sethrael. Hogwarts may be the safest place in the Wizarding World, but it is not as safe as the Elven Realm.”

“I know, Metha, but I will be careful. I swear to you that I will not take any risks. And my godfathers will both be there to protect me.”

She nodded thoughtfully. “I will consent if you will agree to two things: Move into the apartment with your godfathers and allow one of them to go with you whenever you leave their rooms.”

Harry looked at her in horror. “Metha! I can’t believe you would ask me to do such a thing! You are treating me like a baby! I can’t be watched over every minute of the day! I have reached 14 full seasons! I am a hunter for our people!”

“That is the only way I will agree to let you go.”

He frowned. "Daka said it was my choice, and now you are telling me that it's not!"

"Only agree to do those two things, Sethrael, and I will say no more."

Harry glanced out over the lake, refusing to look at her. He had never so felt angry with her before, but at that moment, he was shaking with rage and his breathing was heavy. He felt tears sting his eyes, and to his horror, one escaped and rolled down his cheek. In utter humiliation, he got up and ran into the forest.

Harry sat high in the branches of Eldartha, tears streaming down his face, begging the ancient tree to give him the answers he was looking for. "I know I am still young," he whispered to her, leaning his forehead against her trunk. "But it will be humiliating for me to be treated like a small child who needs a minder. I want to go to school, Great Eldartha, but I can't face the others if I concede to Metha's request."

"Sethrael!"

Harry hurriedly wiped his face with his sleeve and began to climb down the tree.

"Sethrael, answer me!"

"I-I'm here, Daka!" he called, jumping from the lowest branch. He stood waiting for his father, unaware that his face still showed signs of his tears.

"Seth," his father said, appearing in the clearing. He stopped suddenly, gazing at his son's tear-streaked face. "What were you doing?" he asked gently.

"I was just talking with Eldartha," he said, then sniffed and wiped his nose on his sleeve.

His father came to him and wrapped his arms around him. "You have had a very hard day, my son," he said, holding him tightly. "I am sorry for that."

Harry nodded, unable to speak without his voice breaking.

“Your methara is very emotional. Part of it is because she carries a child. Women can sometimes seem unreasonable when they are pregnant.”

Harry cleared his throat. “After the baby is born, will she go back to the way she was?” he asked. “Or will she be unreasonable forever?”

Mithrael chuckled. “She will go back to the way she was,” he said. “But do not let her hear you call her unreasonable.”

Harry nodded. “I don’t know what to do, Daka,” he whispered. “I can’t accept her terms without feeling shame. I am too old to be treated this way. I would not be able to face my friends. Yet, I want to go back to school. Why is she making this so difficult for me? Does she not understand?”

“How can a woman understand what it is to be a man, Seth? It is like you and me trying to understand what it is to be a woman. We do not understand her dreams, her emotions, or her worry, and yet they are very real to her. So real that she is afraid of losing you. Can you blame her for doing everything in her power to keep you safe? You are her son. If anything happened to you, she would never recover.”

“I understand that, Daka, but am I to be sheltered for the rest of my life? I don’t want to live that way. Would you?”

“No, I would not. Seth, let us go back and talk with your methara together. We will reach an agreement that will be satisfactory to you both.”

With Mithrael acting as mediator, he and his mother reached an agreement. He would be allowed to stay in Gryffindor Tower, but he would not walk the halls without an escort. However, his friends would be counted as those who could escort him.

And so he was on the Hogwarts Express, and yet his mother had cried when he left. He hoped that she would not find out about the

escaped Death Eater or that the ministry thought that he would come after Harry.

At the welcoming feast that evening, Harry received another blow to add to his bad mood. There would be no Quidditch this year. Instead, there would be a tournament between three schools. One student from each school would participate, and Harry was too young to enter the tournament.

Unused to depression, he sat picking at his food, wondering if he would ever be happy again, while the others chatted excitedly around him.

“What’s wrong, Harry?” Ginny, who was sitting beside him, asked softly.

He shrugged. “I don’t know,” he said. “I think I’m just in a very bad mood.”

“Has anything happened?”

He looked at her. “Well, I’ve had a guard since I got on the train because they think a Death Eater is trying to kill me. My mother cried when I left because she didn’t want me to return to school. She’s been having dreams that something bad is going to happen to me this year. I had to promise her that I wouldn’t walk the halls alone. And, now, I’m not even going to get to play Quidditch.” He sighed. “It’ll be okay. It’s just that everything has hit me at once, and I’m not used to it.”

She nodded, then took his hand and squeezed it. “If you need anyone to talk to, Harry, I’m here.”

He smiled at her. “I know,” he said. “Thanks, Ginny.”

As Harry fell into the usual routine at school, his mood improved. Although there would be no formal Quidditch games, he was still able to play for fun with friends on free afternoons and weekends. Maybe it wasn’t so bad not playing Quidditch this year. It would give him a whole year to perfect the Wronski Feint.

But on Halloween night, everything changed.

Students from Durmstrang and Beauxbatons had arrived the week before. For the next week, students who were at least 17 were able to enter the contest by placing their names in the Goblet of Fire, which was located in the Great Hall. On Halloween, Professor Dumbledore called out the names of those whom the cup had chosen.

To represent Durmstrang, Victor Krum, the seeker who had played for Bulgaria at the World Cup was selected. Beauxbatons was represented by a very beautiful girl name Fleur Delacour. It was said that she was part Veela, but as Harry had found out at the World Cup, Veelas did not have an effect on Elves, so he couldn't be sure. Cedric Diggory, a 7th year Hufflepuff was selected to represent Hogwarts. When the names were called, they left to a round of applause to go into the trophy room to receive their instructions.

But then, the Goblet spat out a 4th name. As everyone waited in confused silence, Dumbledore read the slip of parchment in his hand.

"Harry Potter," he said.

Harry looked around at his friends in confusion.

"Harry Potter," Dumbledore called again.

"Go!" Hermione whispered, trying to push him out of his seat.

Slowly, Harry stood. "Yes, Sir?" he asked.

Dumbledore looked at him over his glasses. "The Goblet has selected your name, Harry. Did you enter your name in the cup?"

"No, Sir," he said. "A mistake has been made."

"The Goblet does not make mistakes, Mr. Potter," Barty Crouch, Sr. said. "It cannot select a name that was not entered."

Harry took a deep breath. "That may be so, Sir, but I did not enter my name, and I do not wish to participate."

Sirius and Remus stood. "Harry is too young to enter this tournament," Sirius said. "And as his legal guardians, Remus and I forbid him to do so."

Harry sat down, relieved. His guardians had spoken, and that was the end of it.

"I'm afraid it is not that easy," Mr. Crouch said. "This is a legally binding contract. Once his name has been selected, he must participate."

"I have never heard of a legally binding contract that did not have some sort of loophole," Remus said. "You must find it, because Harry will not be participating in this tournament."

Mr. Crouch started to argue, but Dumbledore placed a hand on his arm to silence him. "I will check for a loophole," he said to them. "In the meantime, you may return to your common rooms while we speak with those who have been selected." He and Mr. Crouch followed the participants into the trophy room.

Before Harry could leave the Great Hall, Sirius and Remus approached him. Sirius took his arm and led him to a corner where they could speak privately. "Harry, did you put your name in the cup?" he asked softly.

"No, sir, I didn't. I swear it."

"We believe you, Harry," Remus said. "But we had to ask. We'll do everything we can to keep you out of this tournament so don't worry about it. All right?"

"You will be able to find a way, won't you? I won't have to participate, will I?" Harry asked.

Sirius patted him on the shoulder. "We'll do our best, Harry."

Harry smiled and started out of the Great Hall. Noticing that the halls were empty, he turned back to his godfathers. "Um . . . I promised Metha I wouldn't walk the halls alone," he said with some embarrassment. "Would you mind walking me to Gryffindor Tower?"

"Not at all," Remus said simply, as if he was not surprised by the request. He and Sirius walked with Harry to the door of his common room.

Chapter 17

At breakfast the next morning, Professor McGonagall told Harry that Dumbledore wanted to see him in his office when he had finished eating. Harry gulped down his food quickly, then waited for Dumbledore to leave the head table. He noticed that both his godfathers left with him.

Remus was teaching DADA this year. It had been decided in Harry's second year that, since the position was cursed so that no one could teach the subject two years in a row, they would rotate the position. On the days Remus was recovering from the full moon, Sirius taught in his place. It had been a successful arrangement, not only for the two men, but for Dumbledore as well. For the first time since he had been headmaster, he had not had to look for a new Defense teacher every year.

When Harry arrived in the headmaster's office, he was invited to sit. He chose the seat between his two godfathers and accepted the lemon drop that was offered. His eyes almost crossed at the sour taste.

"I have carefully read the contract concerning the Goblet of Fire," Dumbledore said. "And I spent most of the night reading over the history of the tournament. I have found that the contract has been carefully written to prevent those selected from abandoning the tournament. History tells us that the reason for this is that, because of the bambling that has always been a part of the tournament, people were offered large sums of gold to quit or concede to another competitor. Because of this, charms were put in place to make it impossible for anyone to abandon the tournament or to purposely lose after being selected by the Goblet. By placing your name in the Goblet, you are making an unbreakable vow. If you do not keep the vow, you will die."

"But Harry didn't place his name in the Goblet," Remus said.

"It has been allowed since the beginning of the tournament for a representative of the challenger to place his or her name in the

Goblet. Therefore, it matters not that Harry was not the one to place his own name in the cup."

"But he gave no one permission to do it," Sirius said.

"And that was the loophole I spent the evening looking for," Albus told them. "I even called an expert on the subject who explained to me that it was the one flaw that the magical world had not yet overcome. The Goblet does not know that whomever placed Harry's name in the cup was not acting for Harry. Therefore, it does not matter. Harry is bound by magic to compete in the tournament. There is nothing that any of us can do about it. If he refuses, it will be the same as breaking an unbreakable vow."

Harry felt the blood drain from his face. Sirius jumped up, knocking his chair over, and began to pace. "Damn it!" he shouted. "We need to find out who did this!"

"Whomever it was is no friend of Harry's," Albus said. "The tournament is meant for those who have almost completed their training. Harry has only completed 3 years out of 7."

"And it's dangerous," Remus said. "I have heard that people have died while . . ." He stopped suddenly, seeing the look on his godson's face. "But, then, Harry has always been very advanced," he added quickly. "If anyone can do it, he can."

Sirius turned to Remus, giving him a hard glare. "What?" Then his gaze fell on his godson. "Of course he can," he said. "Harry will win the damn thing!"

"Metha dreamed something bad was going to happen to me his year," Harry said softly. "She didn't want me to come back." Suddenly, he wished that he had stayed in the Elven Realm like his mother had wanted.

"I'll get a message to your father," Remus told him. "He'll want to be here."

"His father is the one who put him in Azkaban in the first place," Hermione said.

"Yeah, but somebody helped him escape from there, too, Hermione, and made it look like he was dead," Ron argued. "It could have been his father."

“Well, don’t worry, Harry,” Hermione said. “We won’t let you out of our sights. And your godfathers are here. You know they’ll be looking for the person who did this.”

Harry nodded. He knew his godfathers were trying to find out who had put his name in the cup.

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Harry was dismissed early from his potions class the next morning to have his wand weighed. When he entered the unused classroom, the other contestants were there, along with his godfathers, Dumbledore, and Ludo Bagman, the Head of Magical Games and Sports. A man with wide, pale eyes that never seemed to blink was standing behind a velvet-covered table. A female reporter with stiff hair, long fingernails, thick make-up, and jeweled glasses was talking with a short, stout photographer.

Everyone stopped their conversations when Harry entered and stared at him as he slowly made his way to where his godfathers were standing.

“Ah, Harry,” Ludo Bagman said. “At last we have our fourth champion. Now, we can begin.”

“Before you do,” Dumbledore said. “I have something I want to say to the champions. Someone, and we do not know who, placed Harry Potter’s name in the Goblet of Fire without his knowledge or his permission. He is therefore being forced to compete against his wishes. If it were in my power to remove him from the competition, I would do so, but it is not. Therefore, I ask that you all show Harry the same courtesy you show the other champions.”

"Yes, yes, of course," Bagman said, smiling at Harry. "Come, Harry. You will be first to have your wand weighed."

Harry allowed Mr. Bagman to lead him to the table where he handed his wand to Mr. Ollivander, the man with the strange-looking eyes.

"Ah," Mr. Ollivander said. "Yes. I remember this wand well. Mahogany. Eleven inches. Pliable. Good for transfiguration. Quite a bit of power, too. It seems as if it were only yesterday that your father came into my shop to purchase this wand. Eleven years old, he was. You look quite a bit like him, but you have your mother's eyes. I remember her wand, too. Ten and a quarter inches. Willow. Swishy. Good for charms. Yes. Yes. You have her eyes."

Harry did not know how to respond to the man who remembered his parents so well, so he remained silent.

"No. No. This wand is not for you. Oh, it's the legal weight all right, but you would do better with your own wand. I will tell Dumbledore to have someone bring you to my shop on Saturday, Mr. Potter, and we will find the right wand for you."

He gave Harry back the wand. "Next?" he asked, dismissing Harry as if he no longer saw him standing there.

Harry went to his godfathers. "He said I had to have my own wand. He wants me to go to his shop on Saturday and get the right one."

"That's not a problem," Sirius said. "I'll take you to Diagon Alley on Saturday, and we'll get you a wand. We thought that, since you use mostly wandless magic, you would be fine with your fathers. It seems we were wrong."

"Mr. Potter," said a sickeningly sweet voice behind them. "I'm Rita Skeeter from the Daily Prophet. I'd like to do a short interview before we take the pictures." Without waiting for a response, she took his arm and steered him toward the exit. Remus and Sirius quickly fell into step beside them.

“You wouldn’t mind if his guardians sat in on this interview, would you, Miss Skeeter?” Remus said. “After all, he is the only champion that is underage.”

She frowned. “Well, actually . . .”

“You know,” said Sirius. “I’ve been wanting to meet you. You write the most interesting articles.”

She turned to Sirius and smiled. “Really? You think so?”

“Oh, yes. I’ve said so often, haven’t I, Remus?”

“Oh, yes,” Remus said. “He can be quite prolific in regard to your work.”

She smiled. “Really? Prolific?”

“Quite,” Sirius said, with a charming smile.

“Well, then, come on. We’ll hold the interview in here,” she said, opening the door to another empty classroom. She sat down on the professor’s desk, crossed her legs, and laid her pad and pen beside her. “You don’t mind if I use a Quik-Quotes Quill, do you?” she asked, wiggling her fingers and smiling flirtatiously at Sirius. “So I can keep my hands free?”

“Actually, I was hoping to speak more off the record,” Sirius said, moving a student desk to the front of the classroom and sitting down directly in front of her. He let his eyes roam down her legs for a moment, and then grinned up at her. “You know, since Harry’s so young and all.”

Harry and Remus glanced at each other, trying to bite back their grins. They sat down in the student desks behind Sirius.

Rita cleared her throat. “All right, then. Harry, you were raised by Elves. Is that right?”

“Yes, “ he said.

“And, yet, you’re not really an Elf, are you, Harry?”

“Actually . . .”

“Oh, who cares about that Elf stuff?” Sirius said, winking at her. “That’s old news. What do you really want to know, Rita? Oh, sorry. Miss Skeeter.”

“You can call me Rita, Mr. Black,” she said, winking back at him.

“And, please, call me Sirius.” He placed his chin in his hand and gazed up at her mischievously.

“Harry,” she said, forcing her eyes from his godfather. “What do you think your parents would say if they knew you had been adopted by Elves?”

“They’re grateful,” he said.

Her eyebrows rose and she looked at him over her glasses. “How would you know that?”

“Well . . .”

“What parent wouldn’t be grateful to have their son adopted by a loving family?” Sirius asked. “I know, if I should find the right woman some day, I would appreciate the fact that someone loved our child enough to care for him. That is, if something should happen to us. Wouldn’t you, Rita?”

“Well, of course, I would be grateful if someone loved our child.” Her eyes widened when she realized what she had said. She picked up the pad and began to fan her face. “Does anyone else find it hot in here?”

Sirius grinned at her. “It does seem to be getting warmer.”

“Now, about the tournament,” she said. “Harry, what do you think . . .”

They were interrupted by a knock on the door. "Time for pictures, Rita," the photographer said, sticking his head in the door. "We have to be out of these classrooms in 5 minutes."

Rita looked down at her empty pad. "Right," she said, and then slid off the desk. "It was delightful meeting you," she said, holding her hand out to Sirius.

He took her hand, bowed over it, and then kissed it, his eyes never leaving her face. "The pleasure was all mine."

"Perhaps we'll see each other again?"

"Oh, you can count on it," he said, giving her a final wink before joining Harry and Remus in the hallway.

"You're such a cad," Remus commented, and Harry burst into a fit of giggles.

Sirius grinned at him. "I've still got it, Remus."

"Yes, well, let's hope it's not contagious."

Chapter 18

Harry had expected his father to show up after he got the message from Remus, but he had not expected the 12 Elven armed guards that accompanied him. As they marched into the Great Hall during dinner that night, Harry groaned and tried to hide his face behind Hermione's bushy hair.

"What's going on?" Ron asked. "Why are they here?"

"I have a feeling it was my mother's idea," he said. "Since she's pregnant, my father probably wouldn't let her come, so she sent them instead."

Ron snickered, and Harry's face turned red.

"Harry, that's not so unusual," Hermione said. "I mean, you're an Elven prince. Of course they're going to want to protect you. Somebody put your name in the Goblet, so there's a very good chance that your life's in danger. In the Muggle world, the royal family always has guards near by. No one's going to think anything about it."

"Really?" Harry asked.

"Of course. In fact, when I found out you were a prince, I was surprised that you didn't have an entourage. That's what people expect in our world."

Ron looked at her as if she had lost her mind, but she kicked him under the table before he could say anything.

Harry let out a loud sigh. "That's a relief. I was afraid everyone would think I was a coward or something."

"Of course no one thinks that, Harry. You're a prince. That's all there is to it."

"Well, I guess being a prince is good for something. At least it hides the fact that I have an overprotective mother."

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Harry sat alone inside the tent waiting for his turn to face the first task. To his relief, he had discovered that all they would have to do is face a dragon. Of course, they were to retrieve a golden egg out of her nest, which contained her real eggs, but Harry was not concerned about that. He was just relieved that his methara would have nothing to be concerned about.

From outside the tent, shouts, screams, and groans had been heard, and then the sound of applause. Cedric and Fleur had collected their eggs, and Victor was still trying to get his. He heard another loud groan from the audience, and then applause. Victor had his egg, so it was time.

Harry stood at the opening of the tent and waited for the whistle, which was his signal. At last, the whistle was blown, and Harry walked out of the tent and through the forest to the enclosure where the Hungarian Horntail was sitting on her nest. As he entered the enclosure, he bowed to her, and looking up into her eyes, spoke to her in his mind.

Great Mother. Do not be afraid. The Wizards mean you no harm.

The large dragon lowered her head until she and Harry were nose to nose. There were loud gasps from the crowd and some of the girls screamed.

Why are you here, Elf Child?

The Wizards have placed a golden egg in your nest, and I am to retrieve it. It is not one that contains your young. When I have retrieved the egg, the Wizards will take you and your young back to your home. Neither you nor your eggs will be harmed.

The Dragon got off her nest and turned to examine her eggs. When she saw the golden one, she carefully raised a long, thick talon and rolled it out of her nest. It landed at Harry's feet.

Thank you, Great Mother.

She settled herself back on her nest. Harry bowed to her, picked up the egg, and walked out of the enclosure.

The crowd sat in stunned silence, then suddenly burst into deafening applause.

“That is the most amazing thing I have ever seen!” Ludo Bagman’s voice announced over the noise of the crowd. “The dragon practically handed him the egg! Three minutes, and not a mishap or injury! What an amazing feat! It’s up to the judges now, but my guess is that this will put Harry firmly in first place.”

Harry couldn’t understand their surprise. Then again, Wizards did not talk to magical creatures in their minds the way Elves did, so he supposed it might seem quite amazing to one who did not know any better.

He saw his parents and grandparents in the crowd and waved to them. They waved back, large smiles on their faces.

Harry looked up as his scores were revealed. Madame Maxime, Professor Dumbledore, Mr. Crouch, and Ludo Bagman all gave him a 10. Karkaroff only gave him an 8, but it didn’t matter. Harry was in first place.

Harry’s parents and grandparents, along with Sirius and Remus, accompanied him to the Gryffindor common room where a party was being held in his honor. Underneath his arm, he carried the golden egg, which Mr. Bagman had told them would contain the clue for the next task. He would not worry about that now. He would enjoy the time with his friends and family.

When they reached the common room, they could hear the celebration from outside. He gave the password to the Fat Lady, and she let them in.

“Harry! It’s Harry!” the crowd shouted when Harry entered with his family. Fred and George ran over and lifted him up on their shoulders.

The crowd begged him to open the egg in the common room so they could all hear the next clue. Finally, Harry relented. When the egg was opened, the most horrible screech sounded, causing everyone to cover their ears. Fred and George dropped Harry from their shoulders.

Getting up from the floor, Harry's eyes met his fathers. They grinned at each other, having recognized the awful noise. It was the sound the merpeople who lived in the lake in the Elven Realm made when they stuck their heads out of the water to scold Harry for throwing rocks into the lake. He knew the only way to understand it was to open it while submerged in water. Tomorrow, he would go out with his father to the lake and listen to the clue.

When the celebration was over, Harry walked with his mother to the Forbidden Forest where the portal would take her and his grandparents back to the Elven Realm.

"You did well, my son," she said. "The next task will be after the baby is born, so she and I will come to watch you together."

Harry smiled and kissed her cheek. "Thank you for coming, Metha. I will take good care of Daka until we return for the birth of my sister."

She smiled and stroked his hair. "You do that, my son. And come home safe to me."

"I promise that I will," he said.

She gave him another kiss and a long hug, and then Harry hugged his grandparents while his father and mother said their goodbyes. After they had left, his father walked him back to the school.

"You recognized the voices from the egg," his father said.

Harry nodded. "Yes, I've heard them often enough. Daka, can we go into the lake tomorrow to listen to the clues?"

"Yes. We will do it before breakfast so the others will not see what you are doing."

“When the weekend comes, may I sleep in the camp with you and the others?”

“You must ask the headmaster for permission,” he said. “His rules are the ones that matter here.”

"All right, Daka. I'll ask, and I'll see you in the morning."

“Good night, my son.”

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Early the next morning, Harry met his father at the camp near Hagrid's hut. They walked to the lake, and after Harry placed warming charms on them both, stripped out of their clothes, and waded in. When they were in the water, Harry opened the egg.

Come seek us where our voices sound,

We cannot sing above the ground,

And while you're searching, ponder this:

We've taken what you'll sorely miss,

An hour long you'll have to look,

And to recover what we took,

But past an hour, the prospect's black,

Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.

Harry and Mithrael rose from the lake, gasping for air. “That was a long clue,” Harry said, taking in deep breaths of air.

“Do you understand it?” his father asked as they waded ashore and began to dress.

“Yes. There must be merpeople in this lake, also, Daka. And they will take something that is important to me. I’ll have to go to the village of the merpeople to find it, and I’ll only have an hour. Daka, I’m going to need some of the gillyweed that grows by the lake in the valley!”

“Do not worry, Seth. I will go to the Elven Realm and gather it for you.”

“Please bring back enough for me to explore the lake so that I can find the village before the task. Do you think I should do that? It’s not cheating, is it?”

“I do not think it is cheating. Otherwise, there would be no reason to give you the clue, except for you to prepare to spend an hour under water. I will bring enough back for you to explore the lake.”

“Thank you, Daka.”

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In transfiguration class that afternoon, Professor McGonagall announced that there would be a Yule Ball on Christmas day. Harry would have to wear dress robes and invite a girl to go with him because he and the other champions would be opening the dance.

“I don’t envy you,” Ron told him as they walked to dinner that evening.

“Why?” Harry asked.

“Having to dance in front of all those people. Who are you going to ask to be your partner?”

“I was going to ask Ginny,” Harry said. “Who will you ask?”

“I don’t know,” Ron said. “I haven’t thought about it.”

“Why don’t you ask Hermione, and then we can all go together as friends? It’ll be more fun that way.”

Ron looked thoughtful. "All right," he said finally. "I'll ask her at dinner."

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“Uncle Sirius! Uncle Sirius!” Harry ran down the hallway to catch up with his godfather.

Sirius stopped and turned quickly, watching his godson rush toward him. "What's wrong, Harry?" he asked, concerned.

Harry stopped in front of him, breathing heavily. "No-nothing's wrong. I need some dress robes for the Yule ball. Can we go shopping?"

Sirius grinned. “Who are you taking to the ball?”

“G-Ginny Weasley,” he said, putting his hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath. “I ran all the way from the Great Hall.”

Sirius laughed. "Can you dance, Harry?"

“No, but Ginny’s going to teach me. She’s going to write to her mum tonight to ask her to send her some dress robes.”

“Tell Ginny not to do that. Tell her that I’m going to take you both out for dress robes this weekend so that you’ll match.”

“All right,” Harry said. “Thanks, Uncle Sirius.”

“Don’t mention it, Harry. Oh, by the way. Who is Ron taking?”

“Hermione. We’re all going together, but Ginny and I have to open the ball with the other champions and their partners, so I want to look decent and be able to dance well.”

“Why don’t you invite Ron and Hermione to go shopping with us, then? Tell them their dress robes are on me. It’ll be my Christmas present to them.”

"Oh, good. They'll like that."

“Have you figured out your clue for the next task yet?”

“Yeah,” he said leaning close to his godfather. “It’s going to be in the lake in the village of the merpeople. It shouldn’t be too difficult.”

Sirius gave him a pat on the shoulder. “Good for you, Harry. I knew you’d win.”

His godson grinned at him. “Well, if I have to compete, I may as well win,” he said. “I’ve got to go tell the others about the dress robes. See you later, Uncle Sirius.”

Chapter 19

On Christmas morning, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny exchanged presents before Harry went to his godfathers' apartment in the staff wing of the castle. His parents and grandparents were already there, enjoying iced buns and hot chocolate.

Harry knew that his parents had left him a small fortune in a Gringott's vault, but Sirius had never allowed him to use the gold contained in it. He insisted on Harry saving it for when he was older and only allowed his tuition for school to come out of the vault. Sirius gave Harry an allowance and bought books, clothes, school supplies, and whatever he needed. This year, however, Harry wanted to buy presents for everyone, so Sirius had taken him to the vault so he could withdraw some galleons.

Harry had never seen so much gold in one place. He had filled two bags, and then he and Sirius went shopping. Because he knew his parents and grandparents were going to be at the Yule Ball, Harry wanted to buy them all dress robes for Christmas. Sirius suggested that they go in together to get them, so they bought everyone, including Remus, a new set of robes.

The mens' robes were black. His grandmother's was gold, and his mother's was silver. Selecting the right style for his mother had been difficult, since the baby made her stomach stick out in front, but Sirius had talked to Madam Malkin about the dress, and she had helped them select one with a high waist and flowing skirt. They had bought shoes to match, and Harry couldn't wait to see his parents wearing their new clothes at the ball.

"Do you know how to do Wizarding dances, Daka?" he asked, watching his father examine the robe.

His father smiled. "I have seen Wizards dance. They just hold on to each other and move their feet back and forth."

His mother laughed at him. "He can dance, Sethrael. Do not worry. I will have him dancing until his feet hurt."

Harry stared at Ginny in awe. Her emerald green dress robes emphasized her auburn hair, which had been pulled back at the sides and hung in loose curls down her back. Small tendrils curled softly around her face. Like Hermione, she wore just enough make-up to accentuate the blush of her cheeks and color of her lips. She was stunning.

Harry placed the corsage of small white roses on her wrist. The ribbon was the color of her dress. "You look beautiful," he said.

Ginny smiled. "And you look very handsome."

Harry took her hand and placed it on his arm. "I was told that I will be the most handsome man at the ball," he said. "But my mother can be a bit biased at times."

Ginny laughed as they followed Ron and Hermione down to the Great Hall.

The large room had been decorated to look like an ice palace. The student tables had been removed and replaced with small round ones covered in white linen. Red poinsettias served as the centerpiece for each table. The plates and cutlery were gold, and the goblets were crystal.

The middle of the room had been kept free to use as a dance floor. The dais on which the staff table usually set had become a stage for musicians. There were chairs and stands for a small orchestra. On each side of the stage stood a Christmas tree. Larger trees decorated every corner of the room.

Harry and Ginny were instructed to wait outside with the other champions and their partners while everyone else entered the Great Hall. At last, when the orchestra was seated and began to play, the champions filed in and went directly to the dance floor where they began a waltz.

He thought he would be nervous with everyone watching, but with Ginny looking into his eyes, he soon forgot that anyone was there.

“You’re doing great,” she said. “You’ve become a really good dancer, Harry.”

“Thanks to you,” he said, swirling her around.

Soon, others joined the champions on the dance floor, and he saw his parents and grandparents dancing. Having grown up in the Elven Realm, he had never really noticed the beauty of his people. He knew his parents and grandparents were handsome, but he had taken it for granted. Now, seeing them among Wizards, the difference was staggering. All eyes seemed to gravitate to the two beautiful couples, and he felt his heart swell with pride.

“They’re beautiful, Harry,” Ginny said, and he saw that she was watching his parents.

He smiled. “Yes, they are, aren’t they?”

After a few dances, they moved to the tables to have dinner. Harry and Ginny shared a table with Ron, Hermione, Neville, Luna, Seamus, Lavender, Dean, and Pavarti. He noticed that his parents and grandparents sat with Sirius, Remus, Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, and Madam Pomfrey.

After dinner, Harry danced with his mother and grandmother while Ginny danced with his father and grandfather. But the rest of his dances were with Ginny. Although his mother was great with child, she was the belle of the ball. He watched her dance with Draco, his godfathers, Professor Dumbledore, and even Professor Snape. He began to worry that she was on her feet too much and glanced at his father who was also watching her with concern.

When she sat down at last, Harry was relieved to see her resting. He was sure his father and grandmother would convince her to stay off her feet for the rest of the night. He hoped so, anyway. She was beginning to look tired.

He and Ginny had sat down to rest a moment and have something to drink when he saw his parents and grandparents leave the Great Hall.

He looked at the large clock that hung above the dais and saw that it was only 9:00 pm.

“Harry,” Sirius said, coming to their table. He leaned over and whispered in his ear, “Your mother is in labor. We’re going to the hospital wing.”

Harry looked toward the doors and saw Madam Pomfrey and Professor Snape leaving. “But the baby’s not due for another month,” he said.

“Sometimes, they come early. Come on. Let’s go.”

Harry stood up and started to leave, then turned back to Ginny. “Ginny, my mother is having the baby. I have to go to the hospital wing.”

She squeezed his hand. “Go on, Harry. I’ll tell Ron and Hermione.”

“Thanks.” He hurried out of the room with Sirius and Remus.

Even before he got to the doors leading into the hospital wing, he heard groans of pain coming from his mother. Ignoring his godfathers’ protests, he flung the doors open and went in.

Screens had been drawn around one of the beds, and the others were empty, so Harry knew where his mother was. Without hesitating, he walked around the screen and into the area where his mother lay. His father sat on a chair beside her, holding her hand and wiping her forehead with a wet cloth. Queen Thespa and Madam Pomfrey were standing near the foot of the bed, covering the lower half of his mother with a sheet.

“Mr. Potter!” Madam Pomfrey scolded. “This is not the time . . .”

“It is all right,” his mother said, holding out her hand to him. He went to the opposite side of the bed and took her hand and raised it to his lips to kiss it.

“How do you feel, Metha?” he asked, pulling an empty chair close to the bed and sitting.

She forced a smile. “It is . . . painful,” she said. “But your potions professor is bringing something that will help.”

Mithrael wiped the perspiration from her forehead. “Our daughter wanted to dance for herself,” he said, smiling gently. “She will be like her methara.”

“I hope she will be as beautiful,” Harry said.

His mother shut her eyes tightly, trying to fight the pain. Harry looked across at his father, who continued to wipe her forehead with the wet cloth. Harry could see that he was trying to hide his worry.

Harry squeezed his mother’s hand, determined not to move until he knew that she and his sister were both well. “I am going to stay,” he said to no one in particular.

His parents looked at him, then his father gave a nod, and his mother gave him a faint smile.

Professor Snape entered the room carrying a goblet. His eyebrows rose when he saw Harry, but he stayed silent. He handed the goblet to Mithrael. “It will ease the pain,” he said.

Mithrael and Harry helped Elsbeth sit up enough to drink the potion, then she lay back against the pillow and smiled. “That is much better,” she said. “Thank you, Professor Snape. I am very grateful.”

He nodded. “I am glad it helped. If you need more, let Madam Pomfrey know, and I’ll bring it up right away.”

“Thank you. I will.”

“It is time to push, Elsbeth,” Queen Thespa said, folding the sheet up to her knees.

“Perhaps Harry would like to step outside,” Madam Pomfrey said.

Harry turned to his mother. "May I stay, Metha? I will not get in the way."

His mother nodded, and Madam Pomfrey huffed irritably.

Ten minutes later, Harry wished he had stepped outside, but it was too late now. His mother pushed until her face turned scarlet, then she would catch her breath for a moment and push again. Harry decided that he didn't want to have any children if this is what it took to get them. He had a feeling his father was thinking the same thing.

At last, the tiniest cry came from the foot of the bed. His grandmother picked up the small bundle and wiped it with a towel, then wrapped it in a blanket and placed it in his mother's arms. All Harry could see was a bit of white fuzz on the top of a strangely shaped head. He didn't want to say anything, after what his mother had been through, but he was pretty sure something was wrong. He watched his father look down at the child, and when he saw tears fill his eyes, he was sure it. They had gotten a dud.

His father reached down and took the baby out of his mother's arms. He walked around the bed to Harry, then leaned down and placed the baby in his arms. Harry looked at the tiny face and ran his finger over the top of the small pointed ears. No. She wasn't a dud. She was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

"Hello, Little Sister," he said softly. "I was going to scold you about all those nights you kept Metha awake, but she was right. You have wrapped my heart around your little finger." He leaned down and kissed her on both cheeks, then looked at his mother. "What is her name?"

"Coriel," she said. "Heart of Light."

He smiled down at the newborn baby. "Corry, I'm your big brother, Seth. You and I are going to have lots of fun together."

“Why don’t you and your dakara go and introduce Corry to her grandfather and godfathers,” Elsbeth said.

Harry handed his father the baby, and walked with him out into the area where the men were waiting. He was surprised to find Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Fred, George, Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, and Snape waiting also.

“I have a baby sister!” Harry announced happily as his father showed the baby around. “Princess Coriel, the most beautiful baby in all the world.”

Ginny and Hermione ran to him and hugged him before going to his father to get a good look at the Elven infant.

Ron came up to him and spoke quietly. “Congratulations, Harry. Not to put a damper on your happiness or anything, but I’ve got a baby sister, too, and they’re not all that great.”

Harry laughed. “Oh, I don’t know, Ron. I think your baby sister is fantastic.”

Ron grinned and shook his head, then went over to take a look at the baby.

AN: I want to thank tg77ed for providing Draco's Elven name. Thanks, tg. Our hometown misses you. MS

Chapter 20

Dear Father,

I hope that you and Mother had a happy Christmas. Thank you for my gifts, and please extend my appreciation to Mother. I missed being home this year, but I did enjoy the Yule Ball. I escorted Daphne Greengrass, who has become a very good friend this year. The other Slytherins are still treating me well, with the exception of Theodore Nott, but I believe his actions are caused more by jealousy than anything else. It seems that Elven blood does not taint quite so harshly as Muggle blood because Elves are, to quote Pansy, "beautiful, mysterious, magical and look almost human." If anything, I've gotten a bit more notoriety for being the great nephew of the Queen of the Elven Realm. Despite my protests, Pansy insists on calling me Prince Lolindir.

Aunt Thespa and Uncle Kathair attended the ball, along with Cousin Elsbeth and Lord Mithrael. I danced with both my aunt and my cousin, both of who insist on calling me by my Elven name, even at Hogwarts. Of course, I had to explain to Daphne that Lolindir means Dragon, same as Draco. Pansy was upset that I did not take her to the ball. She waited until the last minute to accept Blaze Zabini's invitation to attend with him. Of course, Daphne is a much prettier girl and also more refined.

During the dance, Cousin Elsbeth went into labor and had a daughter on Christmas night. The baby was not due for another month, but I have seen them both, and they are well. Cousin Elsbeth allowed me to hold Coriel. She is the smallest thing I have ever seen. I could almost fit her in the palm of my hand. Elsbeth told me that her name means Heart of Light.

Father, Blaze told me that he overheard Nott, Goyle, and Crabbe discussing what occurred on the night of the World Cup. He overheard them say that their fathers all participated. If you know this already, I apologize for sending old news, but it was the first I heard of

mother were staying. If Harry didn't know better, he would think that his mother had had the baby while she was at Hogwarts on purpose so that she could stay and keep an eye on what was going on with him. She did not seem to be in a hurry to leave to go back to the Elven Realm. Not that Harry wanted her to. He was enjoying the time he spent bonding with his little sister.

It had been a big surprise to Harry to find that Corry had his emerald green eyes. Elves did not have green eyes. Theirs were light, silvery blue. When he asked his father about it, he explained that the adoption ritual had given Harry some of his parents Elven blood, but that it had also given his parents some of Harry's. As a result, some of his blood had been passed on to Corry.

"She is the first green-eyed elf," Harry said proudly.

"No," his father corrected. "She is the second. Her brother is the first."

Each morning before breakfast, Harry and his father spent an hour exploring the village of the merpeople in the lake. At first, the merpeople tried to turn them away, but after talking with Mithrael, they relented, and Harry and his father spent several days getting to know the layout of the village and some of the merpeople. By the end of the holiday, they had run out of gillyweed, so Mithrael promised to go back to the Elven Realm to collect more before the second task.

As the days drew closer to the second task, Harry noticed that the other champions were getting nervous. He wondered if they had been able to figure out the clues, and if so, why they had not gone into the lake to explore. Since he had visited the village many times, he was not concerned, although he did hope that whatever they took that was important to him was something large enough for him to find quickly. He hoped it wasn't his new Firebolt that Uncle Sirius had gotten him for Christmas. He didn't know how well it would hold up after being in water for over an hour, and he hadn't even gotten to play his first real Quidditch match on it yet. Just in case, he decided to hide it in his godfathers' rooms until after the second task.

888

On the day of the second task, it was cold and snowing. As Harry walked out with the other champions, he placed a warming charm on himself. He was wearing his clothes of doeskin because they would not weight him down in the water the way his robes would. In a waterproof pouch on his belt, he carried gillyweed and a knife. His new holly wand with a phoenix feather core was strapped to his thigh.

He looked around for his mother and sister and found them standing near his father and godfathers. One of his godfathers had obviously placed a warming charm on them because they both looked comfortable. Hermione and Ron were standing with his parents, but he couldn't find Ginny. He decided that she must be with Luna or some of her 3rd year friends.

When the whistle sounded, Harry dove into the lake. He avoided the thick growth of weeds where he had discovered that grindylows liked to hide. The giant squid was nowhere to be seen today, and as Harry swam toward the village, he wondered if it was hiding because of the crowds standing on the shores of the lake.

Within minutes, Harry had made his way into the village. There, right in the center, he saw what the champions were there to rescue. Ginny, along with 3 other girls, were floating in the water as if they were asleep. A long rope was attached to one of their ankles to keep them in place. Since he didn't really know any of the other girls that well, he decided that it must be Ginny that he was here to rescue. He pulled his knife out of his pouch and cut the rope, then grabbed her by the back of her robe and swam toward the surface.

When they reached the surface, Ginny regained consciousness, and together they swam to the ramp where the judges were waiting. Percy leaned down and helped Ginny out of the water, and then Harry climbed the ladder of the ramp.

"You made it in half an hour," Ron said, taking his arm to help him onto the ramp.

Hermione handed him a towel, staring at his webbed fingers and the gills that were still on his neck. "I didn't think you'd be able to breathe out of water until the gills disappeared," she said.

He wiped his face and placed the towel around his neck to hide the gills. "When I'm out of water, I the gills kind of shut off, and I can breathe normally. I guess I'm sort of like a dolphin or something."

He turned to find Dumbledore and the others so he could get his score and saw Fleur Delacour, still wet, but wrapped in a robe, crying.

"What happened?" he asked.

"She got caught by grindylows and had to be pulled," Hermione said. "Her little sister is still down there. That's why she's crying."

Harry frowned, remembering the end of the clue:

But past an hour, the prospect's black,

Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.

"Tell her not to worry," Harry said, handing her the towel. "I'll be right back." He turned around and dove back into the water.

Harry swam as fast as he could, knowing that the effects of the gillyweed would only last an hour, and it had taken him half that to rescue Ginny. Again, he avoided the weeds that hid the grindylows and swam toward the village. When he arrived, he noticed that the other girls were gone. Only the little blonde girl remained. He had never really noticed how young she was before. She wasn't even old enough to attend Hogwarts.

Taking the knife out of his pouch, he started to cut the rope, but was stopped by one of the merpeople.

"You have already taken your hostage," he said. "This one must stay."

Harry shook his head stubbornly. "Her sister was stopped by grindylows. There is no one to rescue her. I am taking her with me. This is not part of the tournament."

The merman moved back and Harry cut the rope and began swimming with her toward the surface. His one thought was of how he would feel if he had found out that Corry was in the lake and had failed to rescue her.

They had just broken through the surface of the water when the effects of the gillyweed disappeared. The little girl woke up and looked at him in surprise. "Where is my sister?" she asked in a French accent.

Harry pointed toward the ramp where Fleur was leaning out over the water calling for Gabrielle. The little girl waved and swam toward her sister with Harry following her.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!" Fleur cried when he was out of the water. She grabbed his face and kissed both his cheeks. "You saved my little sister."

Harry blushed and looked up to see Ginny watching him. She was trying to hide her grin behind her hand. He grinned back at her.

"You did it! You did it!" Ron said, jumping up and down. "You rescued two people within an hour! I can't believe it!"

Harry turned to the judges who were talking together. Suddenly, Ludo Bagman left the group to make an announcement.

"May I have your attention, please? Each of the judges has awarded 10 points to Harry Potter, which keeps him in first place. However, because he rescued two people within the hour, it has been decided that his score will be doubled for this task. Congratulations, Mr. Potter. You now have 148 points!"

After the applause had died down, he continued.

"The score is as follows: Harry Potter in first place with 148 points; Cedric Diggory and Victor Krum tied for second place with 98 points each; and Fleur Delacour in third place with 60 points. The final task will take place at dusk on the 24th of June. Congratulations to our champions."

Chapter 21

Harry and Cedric sat in the stands of the Quidditch pitch waiting for Ludo Bagman and the other champions. They were thoroughly depressed. Someone had planted a labyrinth of small hedges across the entire field.

"They're totally ruined it!" Cedric said angrily. "Why would anybody do this to a perfectly good Quidditch pitch?"

Harry shook his head. "Do you think they're going keep it like this?"

"I don't know. Maybe it has something to do with the next task, but I can't imagine what we'd do with a bunch of knee-high shrubbery."

"Good evening, Champions!" Ludo Bagman called as he entered the pitch with Victor and Fleur trailing close behind. "I see you've discovered my little secret."

"What is it?" Fleur asked, eyeing the shrubbery warily.

"Well, in one month, these shrubs are going to be about 20 feet high. Can you guess what we might use it for?"

"A maze," Victor said.

"That's right. The Triwizard cup will be placed in the maze, and the first one to touch it is the winner."

"So, all we have to do is find the cup?" Harry asked.

"Well, you'll have to get around a few beasts, which Hagrid will provide," he said.

Harry and Cedric exchanged baleful looks.

"And there might be a spell or two you'll have to break," Bagman added. "But, you have a month to prepare. Harry, being in first place, will be allowed to enter the maze first. Thirty seconds later, Cedric and Victor will enter together, and finally, Fleur will enter 30 seconds

mind open at different ages. It's kind of like growing teeth. You have a couple when you're 6 months old, then a few more by the time you're one, but you don't have all of them until you're in your twenties. I've been able to talk to animals in my mind for as long as I can remember, and as I've grown up, I've been able to do more, but I can't detect spells yet."

“Then there are three things that you need to learn, and we can help you with it,” Hermione said. “First, you need to know a locator charm so you can find the cup. Second, you need a spell that can detect other spells and find out what they do. And, third, you need to trust your instincts when it comes to the animals, Harry. I’ve never seen any animal that you couldn’t talk to, no matter how dangerous it was. However, we will do some research on what kinds of spells effect different kinds of beasts.”

Harry turned to Ron. "You should have seen the Quidditch pitch," he said. "They've ruined it."

Ron looked horrified. “What do you mean?”

“That’s where the maze is. They’ve planted shrubbery over the entire field. By the third task, it’s going to be 20 feet high.”

“Bloody hell!”

Hermione sighed in disgust. "It can be taken down in less than a day, and you won't be able to tell that a maze was ever growing on the field. I can't believe you two have been around magic all your life and didn't know that."

"I can't believe you've only been around magic for 4 years and know everything," Ron said.

"I can't believe we're discussing this when we could be in the library looking for spells," Ginny said.

888

On June 21, at dusk, the champions walked onto the Quidditch pitch for the final task. Harry was accompanied by his family, including his godfathers. Cedric had his father with him; Fleur, her sister Gabrielle and Madam Maxime; and Victor was with his headmaster, Igor Karkaroff.

Ludo Bagman hurried over to them and motioned for them to come closer. The champions and their families formed an uneven semi-circle and leaned close to hear what he had to say.

"Barty Crouch is missing," he said confidentially. "He placed the Triwizard cup in the maze about an hour ago, and then just disappeared. Hagrid thought he saw him enter the Forbidden Forest, but we've searched and there's no sign of him. The other judges and I need to decide what to do, so we'll start just a few minutes late."

The champions and their families nodded, and Bagman, Madam Maxime, and Karkaroff went to join Dumbledore, who was talking with Hagrid. After about five minutes of discussion, they walked over to the champions.

"Sonorus," Bagman said, pointing his wand at his throat. "Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your patience. The final task of the Triwizard tournament is about to begin . . ."

Harry tuned out the rest of his announcement to hear the quiet discussion taking place between Dumbledore and his father.

". . . Hagrid said he looked ill," Dumbledore said, "But he seemed fine when he was in my office earlier to get the cup."

"Do you think this has something to do with the tournament?" Mithrael asked.

"I'm concerned about Barty, but I don't think it has anything to do with the tournament. Mr. Filch watched him place the cup in the maze, and, as you know, it has been guarded constantly. I am concerned that he might be ill."

Mithrael nodded, but he did not seem so sure. "Should I instruct the guards to search the forest?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes. I think that we can start the tournament without him, but the faster we find him, the better."

Mithrael turned to his son. "I will be here when you go into the maze, and I will stay here until you come out," he said. "Be cautious, my son. I do not trust that everything is as it should be."

"I will, Daka," Harry said. He watched his father summon one of the Elven guards and instruct him to take the others and search the Forbidden Forest.

"Sethrael," his mother said worriedly. "If anything goes wrong inside the maze, send up a blue flair so that we will know where you are. Your father will come to you right away."

"I will, Metha, but please don't worry. I'll be fine." He kissed her cheek, and then kissed his sister. "Take care of Metha and Daka until I get back," he instructed her. "And before the summer is over, I will take you for a ride on my broomstick."

He laughed at his mother's raised eyebrow and turned to his godfathers. "I'll be all right," he told them. "Don't worry. I've already decided that I'm going to win this tournament."

Remus placed a hand on his shoulder. "I've never doubted it for a moment," he said.

"You just take care of yourself," Sirius told him. "If you come across something you think you can't handle, turn and go in another direction. Don't try to do more than what you're capable of doing."

"I won't," Harry said and waved to them as he went to the opening of the maze where Ludo Bagman was motioning for him.

"When the whistle blows, you have 30 seconds before the next two champions enter the maze. Make the most of the time you have," he said.

Harry nodded. The whistle sounded, and he entered the maze. He ran to where the path connected with another, then stepped out of sight and took out his wand. Placing it on the palm of his hand, he whispered, "Point me," and the wand turned in his palm, and then pointed left. Harry concentrated for a moment, and then seemed to disappear into the hedge. He had watched his father do this many times, making himself invisible to the animals they were hunting. He knew that it would only work against those that would not be able to sense his magic, but he also knew that it would give him a chance to see them before they saw him.

Running as fast as he could, he used the point me spell before each turn of the maze, then turned onto the new path cautiously, expecting something to jump out at him at any moment.

His first obstacle came in the form of an acromantula. This was one of those beasts that could not be reasoned with. Harry waved his hand and he was suddenly surrounded by an illusion of fire. As he walked toward the giant spider, it began to back away. "Go," he said. "And I will not harm you."

The spider scrambled away, and Harry continued down the path. "Point me," he said at the next turn in the maze, and his wand pointed to the right. Yet, when Harry looked down that path, he saw a green mist hanging just above the ground. There was no way to get around it, and he knew better than to walk through it. He also did not know how to end it. His only alternative was to move it.

Harry pointed his forefinger at the mist and began to twirl it, creating a small whirlwind. When the mist was caught up in the funnel, he pointed toward the sky, and the little tornado rose above the hedge. He ran down the path, keeping his eye on the twirling green mist above him. When he was past it, he lowered his hand and spread his fingers, allowing the mist to once again hover over the path near the ground.

"Point me," he said, and then turned right and hurried in the direction of the cup. He stopped suddenly, seeing red sparks fly above the

maze. Someone was in trouble, but he knew that the judges would send someone to help whoever it was that had sent up the flare.

For several minutes, Harry's path was free of obstacles. He followed the direction the wand gave him, knowing he should be near the center of the maze. Suddenly, an obstacle he had not expected stood before him. It was a sphinx.

"Hello, little elf," she said. "You are the first to arrive. Answer my question correctly, and you may pass. Answer incorrectly, and I will have to eat you. If you choose not to answer my question, you must turn around. What do you choose?"

"I will answer your question," he said. "But if I get it wrong, I don't think I would taste very good."

"And why is that?" the sphinx asked.

Harry grinned at her. "My daka says I'm spoiled."

The sphinx smiled. "Very clever, little elf. Let us see if you are clever enough to answer my question correctly. Are you prepared? If you do not want to answer the question, you may turn around."

"I'll answer it," he said.

The sphinx smiled. "As round as a biscuit, as deep as a cup, yet all the Earth's oceans cannot fill it up."

Harry frowned in concentration. He thought of the chocolate biscuits his mother made for him and the delicate cup Professor McGonagall used when drinking her tea. How could something that small not be filled by entire ocean? Suddenly, he grinned.

"I know this," he said. "At least, I believe I have the right answer."

"What is your answer, little Elf?"

"It's a sieve," he said. "It has holes in it, so it can't hold water."

She bowed her head. "Very clever, little elf. You are correct. Therefore, you may pass. You are near the end of your journey, however there is one more challenge to face, and it is the most difficult of all. The thing you fear most guards what you seek. Be brave, little elf. But, most of all, be wise." She stood and walked to the side of the path, allowing Harry to pass.

Harry did not hurry toward his goal. He thought about what the sphinx had told him. What was it that he feared most? He wasn't sure. The most frightened he had ever been was of Elder Kasha and his knife. Even though he now knew that the wise old Elder invented his stories to frighten the younger elves, he still could not see the man without wanting to protect his privates.

Harry turned another corner of the maze, and there at the end of the path, was the Triwizard cup. He started toward it.

"Seth!" He turned and saw his daka step out of one of the side paths, a smile of relief on his face.

He stopped, surprised. "Daka? What is wrong? Why are you in the maze?"

But before his father could answer, a green light struck him in the back. Harry watched, dumbstruck, as the life left his father's eyes, the smile still on his face.

"NOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!" Harry screamed, and without thinking of who might have cast the unforgivable, ran to his father. Tears of rage and despair ran down his face as he threw himself on the ground beside his father. He wrapped his arms around him and laid his head on his chest. "Daka! Daka!" He sobbed. "No! Please, Daka! Please don't be dead!"

Chapter 22

“Harry?”

Harry raised his head and looked toward the voice. Cedric Diggory stood silently, looking down at the body of Harry’s father.

Slowly, Harry stood and drew his wand, pointing it at Cedric. “Someone cast the killing curse,” he said, tears still streaming down his face. “Did you see anyone?”

Cedric shook his head, watching Harry warily.

“It came from the path you entered,” Harry said.

“Nobody passed me, Harry. I swear it.”

Harry walked up to him, glared at him suspiciously, then walked past him and looked down the path that Cedric had taken.

“Harry, I swear . . . Oh, God!”

Harry whirled around and saw Cedric kneeling on the ground, his hands covering his face. The body of his father had disappeared, and in its place was a hooded figure in a black tattered cloak. Its face was hidden beneath the hood, but the arms reaching out were skeletal, having just a bit of rotting flesh. The figure reminded him of the statues in the Riddle graveyard. Suddenly, Harry realized what had happened. He had faced his worst fear, and now Cedric was doing the same. He pointed his wand at the hooded figure and cried, “Riddikulus!”

The figure shrank until it was only an inch tall. Harry’s laughter was on the brink of hysteria. He was relieved that his father was still alive, yet still trying to recover from the image of his death.

Cedric looked up at him, relieved. “Thanks, Harry.”

Harry nodded and put away his wand. He wiped his face with sleeve while pointing at the Triwizard cup. “There it is,” he said.

Cedric stood up and, together, they walked to the trophy.

“You were here first,” Cedric said. “And you saved me from the boggart. Go ahead. Take it.”

“No. You saved me, too. Let’s make it tie. We’ll take it together.”

Cedric grinned at him. “You have more points than I do, so you’ll actually be the champion, but I’ll be in second place. It’s a still a win for Hogwarts,” he said. “On three?”

Harry nodded, and Cedric began the count. “One . . . two . . . three!” They both grabbed a handle of the cup, then looked at each other in surprise as they felt the pull behind their navels, realizing they were holding a portkey.

They landed on soft ground in a deserted field of stone statues.

“Where are we?” Cedric asked, standing and brushing the dirt from his knees.

Harry stood and gazed around him with a feeling of dread. “I’ve been here before,” he said. “Cedric, we’ve got to get back to the portkey.”

“Why? What’s going on?”

A man carrying a small, deformed baby walked out of the mausoleum. Cedric drew his wand. “Who are you?” he asked.

“Is this the boy?” the baby asked, and they realized that it was not a baby, but a very small man. His face looked ancient and his arms and legs were underdeveloped so that they hung uselessly from his twisted body.

“No, the other one,” the one who was carrying him said.

“Then, kill the spare,” the small creature said.

The man took out his wand and pointed it at Cedric. “Avada—“

“NO!” Harry cried, raising his arms, enclosing the two men in a transparent dome.

“Kedavra!” The man completed the spell, which struck the wall of the dome, bounced off, and rebounded back, hitting his right shoulder. He dropped the twisted creature as he fell to the ground, dead.

The creature's eyes met Harry's through the barrier, full of hatred. Harry's arms shook with the effort of maintaining the shield.

“Cedric,” he said, sweat pouring down his face. “Take the portkey. Tell my father I am at Tom Riddle’s grave. Tell him that Voldemort is here.”

Cedric looked down at the twisted figure in the dome, then up at Harry, torn between going for help and staying. He hated leaving the younger boy alone. It was obvious he could not maintain the shield for long.

“GO!” Harry cried between clenched teeth.

"I'll get help, then," Cedric said, grabbing the cup and disappearing.

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When Cedric appeared on the Quidditch pitch with the Triwizard cup in hand, the crowd burst into cheers and applause. He searched the pitch for the person he was looking for, then dropped the cup and ran to Mithrael.

“Harry’s at Tom Riddle’s grave with Voldemort!” he cried, loud enough for everyone standing near to hear him. “He needs help!”

Mithrael turned to his wife. “Take care of our daughter. I will take care of our son.”

Dumbledore turned to Auror Shacklebolt who was standing beside him. “Bring aurors to the Riddle graveyard in Little Hangleton,” he said, then took off his hat and waved his wand over it, turning it into a

portkey. "Take hold of this," he told Mithrael, Sirius, and Remus. They did as instructed, and soon found themselves in the graveyard where they had banished the bones of Tom Riddle.

They found three bodies lying on the ground: a man, a boy, and what looked like a baby. Mithrael ran to Harry and found that he was still alive. The man and the small creature were dead.

"It looks as though Barty Crouch Jr. was killed by the killing curse," Dumbledore said, looking at the two bodies that were side by side. "And this creature is Voldemort. He seems to have suffocated to death. How is Harry?"

"He is alive," Mithrael said, lifting his son and holding him in his arms. "But we must get him to a healer."

"Take the portkey back," Dumbledore said. "I'll wait here for the aurors."

Sirius and Remus returned to Hogwarts with Mithrael and Harry. When they arrived at the Quidditch pitch, the news had spread through the crowd. Draco was holding Coriel, while Elsbeth paced back and forth in front of him. Hermione, Ginny, and Ron were also standing nearby, anxiously awaiting news of Harry.

Mithrael, with his son held tightly in his arms, immediately began to run toward the castle. Sirius was slightly ahead of him, clearing the way to the hospital wing. Remus stopped long enough to explain to the others what they had found.

"Harry is alive, but unconscious. We don't know what happened. When we got there, Voldemort and Barty Crouch Jr. were dead. Mithrael is taking Harry to the hospital wing."

Elsbeth took off running toward the castle before he could finish. The others followed, Draco more slowly with little Coriel in his arms. "Shhh," he said to her as she started to whimper. "Everything will be fine, little princess. Your brother is alive and will be hovering over you protectively before you know it."

Daphne Greengrass was suddenly beside him. "Do you want me to take the baby so you can go to your cousin?" she asked.

Draco shook his head. "I can't do anything there, but at least I can take care of Coriel so that Elsbeth and Mithrael can be with their son." He smiled at her. "You can help, if you'd like."

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In the hospital wing, Harry lay unconscious on one of the beds. Elsbeth sat on one side, holding his hand, while Mithrael sat on the other side, doing the same. Sirius and Remus stood at the foot of the bed watching Madam Pomfrey run her wand over their godson.

"He's in a magical coma," she explained. "His magical core was exhausted and drained of magic, and the coma is a protective device his body is using to help him heal. He will not wake up until the core has regenerated the magic it's lost. This is so that he will be unable to use magic, which would cause further damage to his core. He'll be fine, though. He should wake up in 2 to 3 days."

"I'll go and tell his friends," Remus said, leaving the screened-in area. He walked outside the hospital wing to the area where the others were waiting. His friends were no longer the only ones waiting. The room was filled with the entire Gryffindor house, the other champions and their families, the Weasley family, most of the Hogwarts staff, and several students from other houses.

"How is he?" Hermione asked before he had completely entered the room.

Remus explained what Madam Pomfrey had told them, and the people waiting breathed a sigh of relief.

"Does anyone know how it happened?" Ron asked, and Remus shook his head.

"I can tell you what I know," Cedric said. He stood and told everything that had happened, from the time they saw each other and dealt with the boggart to the moment he took the portkey back to get help.

“We found Mr. Crouch in his home last night,” he said. “He had been under the imperious and was the victim of a badly performed memory charm. After several hours, we were able to get some information from him. He told us that, just after leaving Albus’s office with the Triwizard cup, he ran into Mad-eye Moody who placed him under the imperious and turned the cup into a portkey. He was told to place the cup in the maze, then go home and wait for him to arrive. Rather than Mad-eye showing up at this house, however, his son appeared and attempted to place a memory charm on him.

“After talking with Crouch, we took him to St. Mungos, then went to Mad-eye’s house. We found him stunned and bound in his own bed. He told us that, earlier in the day, he had heard something outside and had gone to investigate, but remembers nothing after stepping out his back door.” He grinned. “You can imagine how embarrassed he was that his “constant vigilance” failed to keep him from being stunned.”

The others chuckled, and Shacklebolt continued. “After questioning him under veritiserum, we found that he was telling the truth, so we had him checked out at St. Mungos. He’s fine, just furious as hell.”

Dumbledore turned to Madam Bones. “What did you find out about the bodies of Barty Crouch and Voldemort?”

“You were correct about the causes of death on both,” she said. “Barty Crouch did indeed die from the killing curse, and after questioning Mr. Diggory and performing *priori incantatum* on all the wands, we concluded that it was accidental. We believe that the shield Mr. Potter raised was the cause of the other death. We think that a lack of air in the dome resulted in the suffocation of the other victim. However, we have also concluded that it was an accident. We will, of course, have to talk with Mr. Potter when he regains consciousness, but we doubt that he intentionally caused the death of the creature inside the shield.”

“The creature inside the shield is not dead,” Mithrael said. “His body has died, but his soul remains in the Human Realm. Voldemort will try to return again.”

"How is that possible?" Fudge asked. "We saw the dead creature. How do you know that his soul still roams the Earth?"

"Because he has taken precautions," Mithrael said. "He has made certain that he cannot die. He has performed dark rituals that will keep his soul bound to the earth until the Child of Prophecy destroys him. He will continue to search for ways to regain a body."

"Who is this Child of Prophecy?" Fudge asked.

"He will show himself when the time is right," Mithrael said. "But it is an Elven prophecy of which I speak. You Wizards have your own prophecy concerning the child." He looked at Dumbledore pointedly. "Perhaps it is time for you to tell them."

Dumbledore closed his eyes and took a deep breath. When he opened them, everyone in the office was watching him, waiting for him to speak. "I have believed that there would be danger in revealing the prophecy to others," he said. "Not for the Wizarding world, but for the boy of whom it speaks. Others will try to use the boy, and I cannot allow that."

"The boy will not be used by others," Mithrael said. "He has a family who will protect him from that. The prophecy was given to bring hope to your world. Is your world so corrupt that you would keep this from them?"

"Yes," Sirius answered before Dumbledore could speak, and then stood up. "Our world is that corrupt, but I will stand with the family to protect the boy from being used."

Remus rose from his seat. "And so will I," he said. Mithrael smiled at them as he, too, left his seat.

"And I," Madam Bones said, standing.

"I'll protect him," Shacklebolt said, rising to his feet. McGonagall, Flitwick, Snape, and Sprout rose, also, showing that they would stand behind the boy's family, whoever they were.

Then the others rose, leaving only Dumbledore and Fudge seated. Very slowly, Dumbledore stood, looking at Fudge as he did so. "As Minister of Magic, will you protect the boy from all who would use him?" Dumbledore asked.

"But we will need the boy," Fudge argued.

"You cannot use him," Dumbledore said. "You can stand with us or against us, Minister, but you will not use the boy."

Fudge looked around at all those who were standing. They were some of the most powerful people in the Wizarding world. Finally, he sighed. "All right," he said. "I will not allow the boy to be used." He stood with the others. "I give you my word as Minister of Magic."

And so, for the first time since it had been spoken 15 years before, the prophecy was revealed to the Wizarding world. The entire Wizarding world, for though the others did not see it, a small beetle flew out of the window to make the deadline for tomorrow's Daily Prophet.

AN: I am leaving very early in the morning to go out of town for almost a week, so I am posting 2 more chapters tonight. I will return on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week and will resume posting daily. Thank you to all who have read and reviewed this story. I've been overwhelmed by your kind words. --MS

Chapter 23

THE DAILY PROPHET

Secret Prophecy Finally Revealed

By Rita Skeeter

During a meeting in his office early yesterday morning, Headmaster Albus Dumbledore revealed to those present that he had been keeping secret a prophecy he had heard 15 years before. Without revealing the source of the prophecy, he recited it to those in his office.

Those present were Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge, Madam Amelia Bones Head of the DMLE, Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt, Amos Diggory head of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, his son Cedric Diggory who finished second place in the Triwizard Tournament, Lord Mithrael dina Lothair son-in-law of Queen Thespa of the Elven Realm and father of Harry Potter – winner of the Triwizard Tournament, and six Hogwarts professors: Minerva McGonagall (Assistant to the headmaster, transfiguration professor, and head of Gryffindor House), Filius Flitwick (charms professor and head of Ravenclaw), Pomona Sprout (herbology professor and head of Hufflepuff), Severus Snape (potions master and head of Slytherin), Sirius Black (DADA and Harry Potter's godfather), and Remus Lupin (DADA and Harry Potter's godfather).

In the meeting, Dumbledore was asked by Lord Mithrael why he had not yet revealed the prophecy. Dumbledore said he feared that the boy of whom the prophecy spoke would be used. After receiving a promise from each person to protect the boy, Dumbledore revealed the following prophecy:

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches

Born to those who have thrice defied him

Born as the seventh month dies

The Dark Lord will mark him as his equal

But he will have power that the Dark Lord knows not

And either must die at the hand of the other

For neither can live while the other survives

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord

Will be born as the seventh month dies

After searching the Department of Records, this reporter found that only two Wizarding children, Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom, were born at the end of July 1980, shortly after the prophecy was made. Both boys had parents who worked against Voldemort.

Alice and Frank Longbottom were aurors who were tortured into insanity by Bellatrix and Rodolphus Lestrangle and Barty Crouch Jr. They continue to reside in the Long-term Care Ward at St. Mungos Hospital while their son lives with his paternal grandmother, Augustus Longbottom. James Potter was also an auror, and Lily Potter worked in the Department of Mysteries until the birth of her son, Harry. Every child in our world knows the story of what took place on October 31, 1981.

It is evident that both families knew of the prophecy. The Longbottoms and the Potters went into hiding sometime in October. After their friend, Peter Pettigrew, betrayed the Potters, they were killed and their son, Harry, vanquished the Dark Lord. The Longbottoms came out of hiding, but two days later, Crouch and the Lestranges tortured them.

Harry Potter disappeared the night of his parent's death. It was thought that he was taken to live with Muggle relatives. However, when he returned the Wizarding World to attend Hogwarts, it was discovered that the Elven royal family had adopted him.

Sources have revealed that there is, indeed, a registered prophecy stored in the Department of Mysteries. The prophecy was made by ST and witnessed by APWBD. The subject of the prophecy is the Dark Lord and Harry Potter.

Of the two boys, Harry Potter was the only one marked by the Dark Wizard. To this day, he wears the Lightning Bolt shaped scar on his forehead where the Killing Curse struck him. He is the only person who has ever survived it.

A second prophecy was mentioned in the meeting at Hogwarts, though it was not revealed in detail. Lord Mithrael dina Lothair informed the group that an Elven Prophecy also spoke of a Child of Prophecy who would vanquish the Dark Lord, and that the Child is the same boy referred to in the above prophecy.

It is now clear to all who wondered why our Boy-Who-Lived had been raised in the Elven Realm. It is obvious that those who knew him as the Child of Prophecy were protecting him. They did not trust the Wizarding world to do it, and after what happened to Harry Potter and Cedric Diggory during the third task of the Triwizard Tournament, it seems they were right.

To read about the Tournament and the aftermath, see [Harry Potter, Triwizard Champion](#) below and [Boy-Who-Lived in Magical Coma](#) and [What Happened in the Riddle Graveyard](#) on page 2.

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Severus Snape opened the door to the hospital wing and crept quietly to the screens surrounding Harry Potter's hospital bed. He motioned for Elsbeth to follow him out of the room.

She leaned down and kissed her son's hand, then quietly followed Snape outside into the hallway.

“I have been sent with a message from your cousin, Draco Malfoy,” he said. “He asked me to inform you that your daughter is being well cared for, to which I can attest, and for you not to worry about her. Remus Lupin has provided everything that she will need, and Draco is now staying in a separate room with the baby. The entire Slytherin house has volunteered their help, and she has been adopted as the official Slytherin Mascot.”

Elsbeth laughed. "Do not tell my son that. He will want her as the Gryffindor Mascot."

Snape smiled at her. "He will have to be disappointed. Slytherin got her first."

“Thank you so much, Professor Snape,” she said sincerely. “Please tell my cousin Lolindir and all of your house how much we appreciate your help. It has eased our minds to know that our daughter is in good hands so that we can stay with our son. Please let them know how much that means to us.”

Snape bowed his head in acknowledgement. “I will, Princess Elsbeth, and I hope that your son recovers very soon.”

She smiled and watched him walk down the hall, his robes flowing behind him.

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Draco Malfoy sat on a blanket under a tree near the lake. Coriel, now 6 months old, sat in front of him, playing with a small stuffed dragon he had given her. "Say Draco," he said. "Come on, you can do it. Say Dra-co. Dra-co."

The baby looked at him and laughed. “Da-da!” she said.

Draco grinned at her. "That's pretty close," he said, lifting her in his arms and laying back on the blanket, holding her over his face. "You want to fly on a broom? Whish! Whish!" he said, moving her back and

forth, allowing her to “fly” over his head. She squealed and giggled excitedly.

“You know what?” Daphne said, appearing suddenly and sitting on the blanket beside him. “She looks enough like you that people would think she was yours, if you were older. She could be your daughter or your sister.”

“Well, she is my cousin,” Draco said.

“About 50 times removed,” Daphne said teasingly.

“Not quite that many,” he said, sitting up beside her and placing Coriel back on the blanket in front of him and handing her the dragon.

“How’s Harry?” she asked.

Draco shrugged. “He could wake up tomorrow or the next day,” he said. “Madam Pomfrey seems to think there’s nothing to worry about.”

“Is it true what was written in the Daily Prophet, then?” she asked.

He looked out over the lake. “Who knows? I’d never heard of the prophecy Dumbledore witnessed,” he said.

“What about the other one?”

He shrugged and looked down at Coriel. “Do you think she needs another nappy?” he asked.

“You want me to do it this time?”

“No, that’s okay. I’ll do it.”

He reached into the bag that Remus had brought him and took out a disposable nappy. “Come on, little princess. Be good for Cousin Draco this time,” he said, laying her on the blanket in front of him. “She really hates this,” he told Daphne. “But she loves taking a bath.”

Daphne leaned back on her elbows, watching him talk with Coriel as he changed her nappy. He was becoming more attractive to her the more she got to know him. Who could have ever imagined the Slytherin Prince taking care of a baby?

When he had finished, he sat the little girl on his lap. “I love her ears,” he said, gently running the tip of his finger over the top of her small pointed ears. “They make her look kind of exotic, don’t they?”

“Yeah,” Daphne said. “Of course, I suppose elves are rather exotic, aren’t they. You are, Draco. Even before I knew you were partially elf, I thought you looked exotic. Your hair and eyes are such an unusual color. It’s quite attractive.”

He gave her a sideways look, grinning at her. "Really? You think so?"

She laughed. "Yes, I think so," she said, leaning forward to kiss his cheek. "I think you're very attractive."

Draco covered the baby's eyes. "Not in front of the child!" he said teasingly.

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Two days later, Harry awoke from the coma. He felt tired, but well. That afternoon, Dumbledore and Fudge joined his parents and godparents at his hospital bed. Amelia Bones and Kingsley Shacklebolt arrived soon after.

“Harry, I know you have just recovered from a horrifying experience,” Dumbledore said. “But we need for you to tell us exactly what happened at the Riddle Graveyard.”

Harry glanced at his father, who nodded. "All right," he said, noticing that Auror Shacklebolt was taking notes.

“When Cedric and I touched the Triwizard cup, we discovered it was a portkey. It took us directly to the Riddle Graveyard. We barely had time to stand before Barty Crouch came out of the mausoleum carrying Voldemort.”

“How did you know who they were?” Fudge asked.

“I saw Barty Crouch when the auror removed his mask at the World Cup. I was standing nearby because I had just shot him with an arrow and was trying to decide whether to leave him there or take him to the Burrow.”

“How did you recognize Voldemort?”

“It was the face,” he said. “The same one that was on the back of Professor Quirrell’s head in my first year. That’s something that I’ll never forget. Besides, when I’m close to Voldemort, my scar hurts. It’s the only time that it ever does.”

“So, you saw them come from the mausoleum,” Dumbledore said. “What happened then?”

“Voldemort asked Crouch if Cedric was ‘the boy.’ Crouch said, ‘No, it’s the other one.’ Then Voldemort said, ‘Kill the spare’ and Crouch pointed his wand at Cedric and started to say the Killing Curse. Before he could finish, I raised a shield, and the curse bounced off and struck Crouch in the shoulder, killing him. He dropped Voldemort, and I just worked to keep the shield up.”

“Cedric said you sent him to get help,” Dumbledore said.

Harry nodded. “I told him to take the portkey back and tell my father where I was and that Voldemort was there.”

“What happened after he left?” Dumbledore asked.

“I tried to keep the shield up, but it was hard. He just – Voldemort – just kept staring at me like he hated me. He couldn’t move because his body was so malformed, but his eyes kept staring into mine. And then he started making a horrible face, like he was choking or something, gasping for air. Then, his soul left his body and burst through the shield. He said – ‘You cannot kill me, Harry Potter. I am immortal, and it is I who will kill you.’ And then he was gone. I don’t

know what happened after that. The next thing I remember is waking up here this morning.”

“His soul spoke to you?” Fudge asked.

“Not like we’re speaking,” Harry said. “I could hear him in my mind.”

“How were you able to hear him in your mind?” Fudge asked.

Harry shrugged. “All elves can communicate through their minds.”

“But you are not an Elf,” Fudge said. “So, how were you able to do it?”

Harry looked at him as though he had lost his mind. “Because I am an Elf,” he said. “That is how I was able to do it.”

“You are a Wizard,” Fudge argued. “You were adopted by Elves, but you are one of us.”

Mithrael stood. “My son is both,” he said firmly. “He has both Elven and Wizard magic. He walks in both worlds and belongs to both. He is as much Wizard as you and as much Elf as I.”

“Now, see here!” Fudge said, standing also and pointing his finger at Mithrael.

“Minister Fudge,” Elsbeth said softly. “My son became an Elf through magic that you do not understand. When he became our son, our blood became his, and his became ours. He is our child the same as if he had come from our bodies. He is not just an adopted Elf, Minister. He is a true Elf.”

“And what gave you the right—“

“I did,” Sirius said. “James and Lily Potter chose me to be Harry’s godfather. In their will, they appointed me as his legal guardian. Rather than adopt Harry myself, I allowed Mithrael and Elsbeth to do it because I believed he would be safer and happier in their world. I am still his godfather, and so is Remus Lupin. We are his legal

guardians in the Wizarding world, designated by his parents, Mithrael and Elsbeth.”

“That could be challenged,” Fudge said.

“I don’t think so, Minister,” Albus said. “You gave your word as Minister of Magic to protect this child from being used. Do not try to use him yourself, Cornelius, or you will find yourself in a very precarious situation.”

Fudge turned to Dumbledore, his face red with outrage. “Are you threatening me, Albus?”

“No. I am reminding you of your promise, Cornelius, and how easy it is for politicians to find themselves out of office when their constituents find that they’ve broken their word.”

Fudge glared at him for a moment, then shoved his green bowler on his head and stormed out of the hospital wing.

Harry looked at his father worriedly. “He can’t take me from you, can he?”

Mithrael shook his head. “No, he cannot.”

Elsbeth sat down on the edge of his bed and took his hand. “No one can ever take you from us, Sethrael,” she said, smiling at him. “You are our son.”

Chapter 24

Harry had been back in the Elven Realm for one week when his mother told him that she wanted to take him to see Elder Gweneth.

“Why, Metha? I am not ill. I have recovered from what happened to me in the graveyard.”

“That is not why we are going,” she said. “I want her to test your magic—your Elven magic.”

“Why? What is wrong with my Elven magic? I can do everything the others my age can do.”

“There is nothing wrong with it, Sethrael. You can do more than many of the others your age. I want her to test you to see how close you are to having your magic fully formed.”

“Why? I’m not yet 15.”

“Why? Why? Why? Is that all you can ask?”

Harry grinned mischievously. “Why do you ask?”

His mother laughed and cuffed him on the arm. “You will give me gray hair like Old Long Beard’s,” she said.

And so Harry and his mother went to Elder Gweneth to have his magic tested.

It was not a difficult test for Harry. All he had to do was allow her to look into his eyes. They talked together for a few moments using mind magic, and then she asked him to try to do different kinds of magic. He performed all the tasks that she asked of him easily as he had done many times before, but he wondered, if this were a test, why she did not ask him to do something more difficult. Finally, she asked him about the night in the graveyard when he had seen Voldemort’s soul.

"I saw it leave his body," he said. "Then it burst through the shield I had made and spoke to me a moment before it disappeared."

She looked into his eyes and asked him with her mind: What did his soul look like?

The same as when I was in first year and it attacked me after possessing Professor Quirrell. The face was twisted and ugly, as if it had not been fully formed. There were no lips or teeth, and his nose was like slits in a flat face. His head was large, well normal sized for a man, but his body was very small. His arms and legs were useless, but his eyes were very sharp.

You saw his soul when you were eleven?

Yes. Remember? I told the story in the circle.

I thought you were making that up.

He blushed, remembering how he used to exaggerate his stories when he was younger. I did not need to make that up. The truth was more frightening than I could have imagined.

She nodded and looked at his mother. "He has the magic of a fully grown Elf. In fact, he has more than most."

"So, he is ready?"

Elder Gweneth nodded. "It is time."

"Time for what?" Harry asked.

"I will tell you later," his mother said. "Come, Sethrael. We must find your dakara."

He followed his mother into the forest. "What are you not telling me, Metha?" he asked. "Why did Elder Gweneth say that I had more magic than I do?"

“She did not say that you have more than you do. She said that you have what you have.”

Harry frowned. “There are things I cannot do. Why did she not test me on those?”

“What things, Sethrael?”

“I cannot detect magic,” he said. “Well, I can because Hermione helped me learn that at school, but I have to use a spell like Wizards. I cannot do it like Elves.”

His mother frowned. “I do not understand. What do mean you cannot detect magic like Elves?”

“If a spell has been performed on an object, I cannot tell what kind of spell was used unless I use a Wizarding spell,” he said.

His mother stared at him. “Who do you know that can?”

“I thought Elves could when they were grown.”

She burst into laughter. “Oh, Sethrael. You are a silly child. When you go hunting with your dakara, how does he hide himself from the animals?”

“He makes himself invisible to them.”

“Can you still see him?”

“Of course. I am an Elf. He is not invisible to Elves.”

His mother grinned. “He is not invisible to adult Elves, Sethrael, but you have been able to sense Elven magic all your life. Most children your age cannot see an Elf when he uses his mind to fade out of sight because their mind magic has not developed well enough to overcome the illusion. Elves do not really disappear. We only give the illusion of disappearing. We make others believe what we want them to. We are still visible, but their minds will not allow them to see us.”

Harry stared at her in confusion. "We do not really disappear?"

"No. Elves do not perform spells and charms and transfigurations like wizard's do. We are not born with a magical core. Our magic is in our ability to use our minds in a way no other magical being can. We can read thoughts and emotions, we can see through the minds of others, and we can make others believe what we want them to. I thought you understood that, my son."

"But you and Daka can perform spells," he argued.

"Yes, but that is because you gave us a magical core and the ability to perform wandless magic when you became our son. Other Elves do not have that ability."

Harry sighed. "So when I see through the eyes of a bird, I have not become the bird?"

"No, you are still my Sethrael, but you have projected your mind into the bird, and that is why you see through his eyes. You did not change into the bird or possess the bird. You are still sitting on the tallest branch of the tree, but you are seeing through the bird's eyes."

He shook his head. "I feel like an idiot."

"You should not feel that way, my son. You have been influenced by the Wizarding world. When Wizards perform magic, the changes actually take place. Your godfather Sirius actually becomes the dog Padfoot and your godfather Remus changes into the werewolf Moony at the full moon. I should have realized that you were seeing things the way Wizards do, my son, because you are also a Wizard."

"So, I have misunderstood Elven magic," he said. "I have been able to do the things that I thought I could not."

"Yes, my son. You were waiting to develop magic that you already possessed."

She stopped walking and placed her hand on his arm, stopping him also. "When you told us you saw the soul of the Dark Wizard when

you were eleven, we did not understand. We thought you were exaggerating the way you used to do when you were telling your stories in the circle. It was not until you awoke from the magical coma and told us how you saw his soul leave his body and burst through the shield that we understood that you were able to see souls. My son, that is the most advanced magic that can be done in our world. When you are able to see souls, your magic has fully developed.”

“And that is why you wanted me to see Elder Gweneth today,” he said. “You wanted to be sure.”

“Yes. Your dakara and I had to be sure before we allowed the Elders to speak with you about the Dark Wizard. We did not want you to try to perform magic that was beyond your capability.”

“What am I to do, Metha? What did Elder Gweneth mean when she said ‘It is time’?”

“She meant, my son, that it is time for you to vanquish the Dark Lord.”

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Beneath the branches of Eldartha, Queen Thespa and the Elders sat on smooth stones that had been placed there many years before. Harry sat on the ground in front of them, between his parents. His mother held young Coriel on her lap.

“Sethrael,” the Queen said. “Do you remember three summers past when you went with your dakara to the graveyard to banish the bones of Tom Riddle?”

“Yes, Elmethara. I remember.”

“Do you know why the bones were banished?”

“Yes, Elmethara. They were banished so that the Dark Wizard could not perform the spell that would give him a new body.”

His grandmother nodded. "We had hoped to prevent his return until you were ready to vanquish him. Sethrael, do you know the Prophecy of El?"

"Yes, Elmethara. Daka and Metha have taught me the prophecy, and they have explained to me that I am the Child of which the prophecy speaks."

"So, you know what this means."

"It means that I am to vanquish the Dark Wizard and set our people free."

The queen smiled at him. "Elder Gweneth has examined your magic and found that it has fully developed. You have the magic of an adult Elf, Sethrael, and you have the magic of a Wizard, although you are not yet fully trained. Your godfathers are going to work with you this summer to help your learning advance in the areas of defense, charms, and transfiguration. The Elders are going to work with you to help you learn two spells. These spells, in combination with the Wizarding spells, will allow you to vanquish the Dark Wizard. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Elmethara."

"Do you remember the book with dark magic that our enslaved brother gave to you and your dakara?"

"Yes. The book that Daka hid in the Realm of El."

"That book houses a piece of the Dark Lord's soul. His soul has been broken into pieces and hidden so that it is impossible for him to cross into the Summerland."

Harry frowned. "Do we want him to cross into the Summerland, Elmethara? He is evil."

His grandmother smiled. "Darkness cannot cross into the Summerland, my grandson, for it is located in the Realm of Light. When the pieces of his soul are reunited, he will be forced into the

Realm of El. As he crosses the river that leads into the Summerland, all that is dark within his soul shall be destroyed and only that part which is light will remain to complete the crossing.”

“But what if none of his soul is light?”

“In that unlikely event, his entire soul will be destroyed. But, Sethrael, even the darkest of souls have some light in their depths. It may be hidden, but it is there.”

Harry nodded, relieved that no evil could enter the land where his first parents lived.

“Now, the first bit of magic that you will learn from the Elders is how to unite the pieces of the Dark Wizard’s soul to make it whole. That will be the least difficult ritual, but it must be done before you can perform the second one. The second ritual will bring his soul first into the Elven Realm, then to the Realm of El, and finally to cross over into the Summerland. It will take some time for you to learn both rituals, so the Elders will begin to teach you tomorrow. Your father will continue to help you perfect the use of your sword. Your godfathers will also spend the summer here to teach you more about Wizarding magic. It will be a difficult summer for you, my grandson, but when the Dark Wizard is gone, the Wizarding world will be safe once again, and a great darkness will be lifted from the Earth so that you can complete the prophecy. You will then be able to free our brothers.”

Harry smiled, for to the Elves, that was the most important part of the prophecy—freeing the enslaved so they could be reunited in the Elven Realm.

“Mithrael,” said the Queen. “Did you bring your son’s sword?”

“Yes, my Queen,” he said, picking up the long leather package he had brought with him. He unwound the leather covering, then the velvet, which protected the sword. He stood and handed Sethrael’s sword to the Queen.

“Come, my grandson. Kneel before me,” she said, rising.

Sethrael stood and moved before his grandmother and the surrounding Elders. He knelt in front of her, and his family stood behind him.

Queen Thespa grasped the leather handle of the sword and placed the tip of it on Sethrael's head. "Sethrael dina Mithrael, before your family and the Elders of our people, beneath the branches of sacred Eldartha, by the Sword of El, I proclaim you King of all Elven people. Your words shall be law in our land from this day until you cross into the Summerland. As the Red Dragon united the kingdoms of Britain, you shall unite the magical world. And from your mouth will come words of wisdom, and your magic will be used for the good of all people. For in you, the Red Dragon and Great Enchanter have become one. And all people in all lands will honor your name forever and remember you as the first and only King of the Elven Realm."

Chapter 25

The Coronation of King Sethrael

The next week, invitations to the Coronation went out to Muggles and magical creatures, including Goblins, Wizards, Centaurs, and House Elves. The Muggles who received invitations were those who already knew of the Magical World, for they had children or siblings who had attended Hogwarts. Even the Dursley family, Harry's aunt and uncle, received one. A personal note from Dumbledore informing them that the Muggle Queen and Prime Minister of England would be in attendance guaranteed their acceptance.

The invitation was written on ivory colored paper in gold ink. The script was a work of art, and the paper was so thin, it seemed too fragile to have survived the quill. Yet, it was received in perfect condition, and Mrs. Weasley framed it and placed it on the mantle of the fireplace for all to read:

Let it be known throughout the land

That the Coronation of

King Sethrael of the Elven Realm

Will commence

On the anniversary of his birth

Thirty-first of July

Nineteen hundred and ninety-five

At dusk

On Hogwarts Grounds near the Forbidden Forest.

Queen Thespa of the Elven Realm

Requests the presence of

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur William Weasley

And their children

William, Charles, Percival, Frederick, George, Ronald, and Ginevra,

As her eminent guests

To the Coronation and Gala Ball.

At dusk, on the 31st of July, the grounds of Hogwarts were filled with all sorts of magical beings and Muggles. The Muggle Prime Minister, as well as the Muggle Queen and her family, including the Prince of Wales and his sons, were in attendance. The Minister of Magic and the entire Wizengamot were also present, as well as all department heads in the Ministry.

Hogwarts professors and students, with their families, and Hogwarts alumni were also there. The grounds had never held so many people.

Chairs were placed on the grounds, facing the forest, leaving an aisle down the middle. Elven guards stood at the ends of each row, checking invitations before allowing anyone to be seated. Guards were also stationed at the Hogwarts gates and along the tree line of the Forbidden Forest.

When all were seated, the Elven guards moved to stand in a circle around all who were seated and a raised platform that had been set up just in front of the Forbidden Forest, close enough to be under the branches of the trees.

When they were in place, 100 Elven children slowly emerged from the forest. Forming two lines, they walked up a set of steps behind the stage, crossed to the front, and then walked down another set of steps in front of the platform.

The children were dressed in white silk robes. Half carried a small lantern and the other half a basket of flower petals. The children began to sing. As they sang, they slowly walked down the middle

aisle to the back of the guests, then one line went behind the right side and the other went behind the left. They continued up the outside of the two sections of seats, and met again in front of the platform.

They circled those attending three times, and as they circled, the ones with baskets scattered the petals around the audience. They continued to sing as they circled. The song was three verses. Each verse was sung first in the Elven language and then in English.

Rejoice, Children of El

Lift up your hearts in praise

The Red Dragon has returned

To sit on his throne of peace

To wear his crown of wisdom

To wield his sword of justice

His sword called Sethrael

Rejoice, Children of the World

Lift up your eyes in hope

The Child of Prophecy has come

To free our enslaved brothers

To bring peace to all the realms

To bring all beings together

Our wise King Sethrael

Rejoice, Children of Light

Lift up your voice in song

King Sethrael has come

To show justice to the world

To show mercy to all beings

To show love to all creatures

Our Great King Sethrael

When they had completed their song, they stood in a circle in front of the Elven Guards, and then the haunting sounds of flutes and lyres came from out of the forest. Suddenly, thousands of fairies flew from the branches of the trees and circled the assembly three times, then flew back into the branches, filling the forest with soft light.

The Elders of the Elven Realm emerged from the forest, making their way across the platform and circling the assembly three times as the children and fairies had done. As they circled, the beautiful melody continued to play. Slowly, they encircled all who had assembled, then stopped at the front of the platform, on either side of the steps, and stood in a line facing the audience. Behind them were two long, cushioned benches, which had been built into the platform.

Out of the forest came two centaurs, one male and one female, who made the same three circles as the children and Elders had done. Directly behind them walked two goblins, male and female, and then a male and female house-elf. Behind the house-elves walked Argus Filch and Arabella Figg, both of whom were dressed in their finest robes. Albus Dumbledore and Cornelius Fudge came behind them, then the Muggle Queen and Prime Minister. Behind them walked Queen Thespa and Lord Kathair, then Sirius and Remus, and finally Princess Elsbeth and Lord Mithrael, who carried Princess Coriel. When the group had completed the three circles accompanied by the soft music coming from the forest, they went back up the platform and, with the except of the Centaurs who would remain standing throughout the ceremony, stood before seats that had been placed there earlier.

The music stopped and, for 30 seconds, there was complete silence. Then came the sound of a conch being blown. After three long tones, Harry Potter came out of the forest alone and walked up onto the platform. There was complete silence as he walked across the stage and down the front steps. As he made his way slowly down the center aisle, the children began to sing the song again, throwing flower petals in his path as he made the circles.

He smiled, waving at those he knew as he passed them. Like all the other Elves, he was dressed in white silk, but his robes were trimmed in gold. His hair was loose and he wore no shoes or accessories.

He completed his walk, strode back up to the platform, and sat down in a chair beside his grandmother.

When everyone was seated, Queen Thespa stood and moved to the center of the stage. She projected her voice for all to hear.

“To the beings of all Realms, we welcome you today to the Coronation of King Sethrael, the first and only king of the Elven Realm.

“In our world, we call ourselves the Children of El. The word El is a sacred word. It means Light; it means Goodness; it means Purity; it means Perfection. El is the name we call the Creator.

“The Children of El have never had a King, but we once served one. Many hundreds of years ago, there was a man who united the kingdoms of Britain. He was not an Elf, nor was he a Wizard. He was of the race of Man, what we call a non-magical being and what Wizards call a Muggle. Yet non-magical people only remember him in legend. His name was Artur, but legend has renamed him Arthur. To the Elves, he was known as the Red Dragon. His teacher, his friend, and his advisor was a Wizard named Myrddin, but legend has renamed him Merlin. Elves called him the Great Enchanter.

“This is the only King the Elven people have ever served until now. Wizards and Men also served this king. His reign brought peace to us

all for many years. But, then, he was gone. Even legend remembers the truth of his ending.

“On the day he left this Realm, a prophecy was spoken by a Child of El. It was a prophecy that predicted many years of darkness for the Elven people, but then great light would finally appear. Despite the years of darkness, it brought hope to our people, for it promised the return of the Red Dragon and the Great Enchanter. And because we awaited his return, we selected our first Queen of the Elven Realm and left the Throne of the King empty, waiting for his return.

“Every Elf child knows this prophecy, and today I will share it with you. It is known as 'The Ancient Prophecy of El.'”

Weep not, Children of Light,

For though the Great Enchanter was deceived, he lies not in darkness;

And though the Red Dragon has fallen, he will return again.

Together they rest in the Realm of El.

And 400 years shall pass, and all will seem forgotten.

Truth will hide in Myth.

Great wars will rage between Elf, Wizard, and Man;

And the Dark will take half of Light's children.

For 1000 years, their magic bound in slavery,

They will forget the joy of freedom; they will forget the wisdom of Eldartha;

And their beauty will fade with their memories.

And Wizards will hide their faces from Man;

And Elves will no longer live among the forests of men;

And Man will forget when Magic covered the land.

Fear not, Children of El,

Though Darkness will rise in the Realm of Wizards.

For 10 years, hope will be lost.

Then a prophecy shall be given to bring them hope,

But the White Bee will hide it in secret,

Yet a servant of the Black Serpent shall hear it in part.

Then a child shall be born to unite the realms.

And he will be marked by the Dark, but the mark will be a sign of
Light and Power.

And in this child, the Red Dragon and the Great Enchanter will return
as one.

And his sword shall have a new name, for it will be touched by El.

Rejoice, Children of Light,

For the Child of Prophecy shall slay the Black Serpent;

He shall slay the one who flees from eternal sleep.

And he shall free our brothers; and all will once again be united.

Then Peace will reign as it did in the time of the Red Dragon and the
Great Enchanter.

Seek not the Child of Prophecy in the Realm of Elves,

For he shall be born of a pure Wizard and a daughter of Man.

But when you have found him, teach him your ways,

For he will be hunted by the White Bee; and he will be hunted by the Black Serpent.

But neither shall find him until he draws his sword from the Realm of El.

And he will be a Prince among you.

You shall call his name "Touched by Light."

And his sword shall bear his name.

He shall call it

Sethrael.

When Queen Thespa finished quoting the prophecy, she motioned to someone behind the platform, and an Elven child appeared carrying a sword, which had been draped with a scarf of purple silk.

Queen Thespa took it, holding it by the tip and the handle where everyone could see it.

"On the anniversary of my Grandson's birth, five years ago, his first mother, Lily Potter raised this sword from the River of Purification in the Realm of El and placed it in his hands. His father, Mithrael dina Lothair, and his godfathers, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, witnessed this event.

"At that moment, my grandson raised the sword over his head, and a bolt of lightening came out of the heavens and struck the tip, yet my grandson was not harmed. When he lowered the sword, he saw that the image of the lightening bolt had appeared on the pommel where it had not been before.

"The word Sethrael means 'Touched by Light.' Sethrael is the fulfillment of our prophecy. In him, the Red Dragon and the Great

Enchanter have returned as one. It is for this reason that we crown our first Elven King today. Today, the Red Dragon will sit on his throne once more.”

The audience applauded, and Queen Thespa waved her hand and, in the middle of the stage, a solid gold throne appeared. On each side of the throne, a large gold lion with eyes of rubies had been sculpted to form the legs, arm, and side of the throne. Two gold dragons, their eyes made of emeralds, formed the base and back. The cushions of the seat and back of the throne were red velvet. It was the most intricate and elaborate work of art that many had ever seen.

Queen Thespa reached her hand out to her grandson and led him to the throne. When he was seated, she said, “King Sethrael, you have taken your throne which has been empty for over 1400 years. It is the Throne of Peace. Will you do all within your power to bring peace to all realms for as long as you occupy this throne?”

Harry bowed his head. “Before all, I swear that I will do everything within my power to bring peace to all realms.”

The Queen picked up the sword and placed it in Harry’s hands. “King Sethrael, you have drawn your sword which bears your name from the Realm of El. It is the Sword of Justice. Will you do all within your power to bring justice to all beings for as long as you wield this sword?”

Again, Harry bowed his head. “Before all, I swear that I will do everything within my power to bring justice to all beings.”

Queen Thespa gestured toward the forest and an Elven child brought out a gold crown on a purple pillow. She took the crown and placed it on the head of her grandson. The solid gold crown was carved in the shape of leaves, separated by rubies, emeralds, amethysts, and diamonds, which formed a circle around his head. “King Sethrael, you now wear the crown of your people. It is the Crown of Wisdom. Will you do all within your power to rule with wisdom, mercy, and love for all for as long as you wear this crown?”

Bowing his head, Harry said, "Before all, I swear that I will do everything within my power to rule with wisdom, mercy, and love for all."

His father placed Coriel in the arms of Sirius, then he and Elsbeth made their way to the throne. Mithrael carried a red velvet cloak lined with ermine. His mother carried a small gold knife.

Taking his hand, Elsbeth helped him rise from the throne, then gathered his hair in her hands and cut off it with the gold knife. His father draped the red cloak around his shoulders.

"You will make many sacrifices for your people," his mother said.

"But you will always be wrapped in their love," his father added.

The Queen and his mother and father knelt in front of him. "Hail, King Sethrael!" they cried. "King of the Elven Realm!"

All the Elves then knelt and repeated, "Hail, King Sethrael! King of the Elven Realm!"

And then Albus Dumbledore stood and cried, "Hail, Harry James Potter, Child of Prophecy!"

And all the audience stood and repeated his words.

"Hail King Sethrael, Friend of Goblins!" the female Goblin cried.

"Hail Harry Potter, who sits among the stars!" the male Centaur announced.

"Hail King Sethrael, who will free his people!" the female house elf said.

A loud screeching noise came from the Black Lake, and all turned to see the merpeople who were shouting something toward the King. Harry and all who understood Mermish burst into laughter.

And then Harry helped his grandmother and mother to stand. Then faced the assembly while everyone continued to shout out their praises. Finally, he raised his hands asking for quiet and for everyone to be seated.

“For those who do not speak Mermish,” Harry said. “The Merpeople were shouting ‘Hail to the Elf Child who throws stones into our lake!’”

When the laughter had died down, Harry began to speak.

“Today is a special day for me,” he said. “For it is my birthday, and I am now 15-years-old.”

The audience laughed again.

“I have also been crowned as the first and only King to ever serve in the Elven Realm.

“It may seem strange to those of you who are not Elves to hear me use the word ‘serve’ rather than ‘reign,’ but I have learned from my grandmother that the only way to lead successfully is by serving. I have watched my grandmother and my mother sew clothes for our people, help cook our supper in the evenings, attend mothers who are having babies, and heal those who are sick. My grandmother serves our people and will continue to do so, for I have not taken her place, but will serve by her side.

“You may think that being King would give me some special privileges, but in the past week, I have found that it doesn’t. I may be King of our people, but my mother still checks to make sure I have washed my neck and behind my ears before she allows me to slip into my bed at night. Uncle Remus still scolds me if I do not study my lessons hard enough, and Uncle Sirius still helps me prank Uncle Remus if he scolds too much. My father has warned me that, should my head begin to swell, I am not too old or too powerful to be sent to Elder Kasha for a lesson in humility.

“In our world, when a child seems to be forming a negative habit such as lying, cruelty, arrogance, or laziness, much to our gentle mothers’ displeasure, our fathers send us to Elder Kasha to hear a tale of

another child who, in the past, had the same fault. The bad behavior of that child always leads to a terrible fate, which we are reminded could very well be our own fate if we continue down that path. The stories are frightening, yet the child who hears them decides that the negative habit is not worth the risk of meeting the same fate as the child in the story.

“I was sent to Elder Kasha once when I was five years old for aiming my sling at my father and hitting him with a stone. I learned a very good lesson that day that has stayed with me all this time. I will not go into detail, but I will tell you that I cannot look at a sling, a stone, or Elder Kasha without remembering this lesson and being thankful that I still retain all my body parts.

“I am still a young man, but in my world, I am a hunter. I will continue to hunt and gather food and medicinal plants for our people. I will continue to sit with the hunters before supper and share stories in the circle after we eat. I will not sit on a throne or wear a crown, except for special occasions. I will serve my people as every Elf in our Realm serves. I will sit with the Queen and the Elders under the branches of Eldartha, the oldest tree in our forest, and learn through their words, experiences, and wisdom.

“Elves, Wizards, Men, and all magical beings once lived side by side in peace. Muggles knew of our kind and came to us when they needed help. But, then, Wizards began to hide themselves from Muggles, Elves left the Human Realm, and a great mistrust spread between all people.

“A thousand years ago, Elves and Wizards were at war. Half of our brothers and sisters were captured and enslaved. They became known as house elves in your world. Over the years, they forgot the magic of our people and our love our freedom. Their magic was bound, except what they needed to serve others. They lost the memories of our race. But they are still our people. They are our brothers and sisters. The season is approaching when they will return to their home.

“Those of you in the Wizarding World who depend on the labor of house elves must begin to make preparations for their departure, for they will be freed and will return to the Realm of Elves.

“I do not tell you this as a threat, but so that you can prepare, for their freedom will not be won by fighting. It will be won when the bonds of forgetfulness are broken and they remember who they are. And then they will no longer be enslaved. They will regain the love of freedom and beauty they once possessed. And they will remember their way home and return to the Realm of their people.

“We do not want war with other beings. We want peace. In our world, we are taught that all life is precious. All are equal. All are sacred. No creature is above another. We all have our places on this Earth, and we must share it.

“It is my hope that all people will once again be united. It may be a slow process, but the world was a better place when we all lived as brothers. It is my goal to unite the magical world where everyone will live free and equal as they were meant to—as it was intended—as it is done in the Realm of El.”

Chapter 26

Harry, his family, and the guests who had sat on the platform during the Coronation were carried in white and gold unicorn-drawn carriages to the school where the Ball would be held in the Great Hall. Harry jumped out of his carriage when it stopped in front of the doors and ran to the Trophy Room where the dress robes he had worn at the Yule Ball had been placed. Before he could change, however, his mother walked in and insisted on giving him a proper haircut before he put on his robes.

He sat patiently while his mother cut his hair. "Now, I remember why I was happy for you to wear your hair long," she said. "Your hair sticks up all over your head."

Harry grinned at her. "If I wore glasses, I would look like my first father. His hair sticks up all over, too."

When he was ready, his mother placed the gold crown back on his head, and they went back to the door of the Great Hall where a receiving line had formed to formally greet the guests. It took over an hour for Harry to shake the hands of all who entered, and by the time it was over, he was tired, his face hurt from smiling, and his hand felt like it had been squeezed in a vise. Yet, he still had more duties to perform, so he hid his exhaustion and went to the head table for dinner.

After everyone had eaten, the tables were cleared and the small orchestra that had played at the Yule ball set up their instruments. Elder Kindarth mounted the stage to make an announcement.

"The ball will be opened with a dance by King Sethrael and his partner Miss Ginevra Molly Weasley, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur William Weasley.

Harry found Ginny, bowed to her, took her hand, and led her to the dance floor. The music began, and they waltzed as they had done together at the first dance of the Yule ball.

"You look beautiful," he told her. She was wearing the same robes she had before, and he loved the way the green accented the red in her hair and the cinnamon shade of her light brown eyes.

"Thank you," she said. "Did your mother tell you that you'd be the most handsome man at the ball this time?" she asked, grinning at him.

"No, she didn't. She told me to hold my shoulders back and not step on your toes."

Ginny laughed. "Then I will tell you that you truly are the most handsome man at the ball. I really like your hair short like that."

"Even with it sticking up all over?"

"Especially with it sticking up all over," she said.

He laughed, held her closer, and moved her across the dance floor.

"After this dance, I've got to dance with the Muggle Queen and the Prime Minister's wife and about 10 other people I don't know, but after I've done what I have to, may I do what I want to and dance the rest with you?"

"Of course. I'll save all but the first 12 dances for you."

"Don't dance any of those 12 with anyone better than I am, or I'll be jealous and you may not want to keep your promise."

"As if you had a reason to be jealous," she said. "I have eyes only for the King."

He smiled. "And the King has eyes only for you, Miss Ginevra."

After the first dance ended, Harry danced with his grandmother, his mother, the Muggle Queen, the Prime Minister's wife, the Minister of Magic's wife, Arabella Figg, Professor McGonagall, and all the other women with whom his grandmother had instructed him to dance. Then he was introduced to his first mother's sister and her family, the Dursleys.

Petunia actually curtsied when Harry was introduced to her. She was tall, skinny, and had a face similar to a horse. Uncle Vernon was tall and very fat with a moustache that looked like a brush. Dudley was a big boy, not quite as heavy as Uncle Vernon, and was blonde like his mother. He seemed very shy.

"I'm sure we have met before," Harry told them, "Although I was too young to remember it. But it is very nice to finally see you again, Aunt Petunia, Uncle Vernon, Cousin Dudley."

Vernon and Dudley shook his hand, and Harry asked his aunt to dance with him. "We're family, Harry," she said while they were dancing. "You must come visit us as often as you can."

"I will," he said. "And you must bring your family to visit me."

She smiled. "It would be an honor."

When the dance was over, he escorted her back to Uncle Vernon, thanked her for the dance, then left to find Ginny.

"Now, I can have fun," he said, taking her to the dance floor.

"Who was that last woman you danced with?" she asked.

"That was my first mother's sister, Aunt Petunia. She doesn't look anything like my mother. Lily was very beautiful, and her hair was almost the same color as yours."

"You remember her?" Ginny asked, surprised.

Harry grinned. "It seems like only this morning that I last saw her," he said. Of course, it had been only that morning that he had made his semi-annual visit to his parents in the Realm of El, but very few people, other than the Elves, knew about that.

At midnight, the ball ended. When the guests were gone, Harry walked into the Forbidden Forest with his family and the other Elves. It had been a long, tiring day, and though he would always remember

it as one of the best days of his life, he was glad it was over. He laid his head on his mother's shoulder and covered a yawn with his hand. "I wish I were as small as Coriel," he said. "So you or Daka could carry me home."

His mother smiled and slipped her arm around his waist. "You have had a long day, my son. You will sleep well tonight."

"I hope so," he said. "I couldn't sleep last night for all the excitement. I'm ready for things to go back to normal."

"You did well today, Seth," his father said, coming up beside him and ruffling his short hair. "But you do not look like my son with your hair so short. It will take some time to get used to it."

"Ginny likes it," Harry told him.

His parents smiled at each other over his head. "So I don't suppose you'll let it grow back, then, will you?" his mother asked.

"I might keep it like this for a while," he said.

Mithrael laughed and shifted his sleeping daughter to his other shoulder. "Ginny looked nice this evening."

"Yeah, she did," Harry said. "I told her she looked beautiful. That's when she told me she liked my hair. She said I was the most handsome man at the ball."

"She's right. You and your dakara were the most handsome men there," his mother said.

"Metha, you are very fortunate to have Daka and me," Harry said seriously. "It gives you something to brag to the other women about since none of their men are as good looking as we are."

"Or as modest," his father said, laughing, then stopped suddenly and turned around. He listened for a moment, and then handed the sleeping baby to Sethrael. "Get your methara and sister to the Elven Realm," he said. "I will be there shortly."

He started back the way they had come, signaling to some of the guards to follow him. The other Elves, who had scattered about while walking toward the forest, moved closer together. The guards that had stayed notched arrows in their bows and surrounded the group of Elves protectively.

Harry and the others hurried toward the portal. One of the Elders opened it, and two guards stood on either side of the tree. The Elves hurried through the portal, leaving the Forbidden Forest behind.

When they were safely in the Elven Realm, Harry turned to his mother. "Did you hear anything, Metha? Why do you think Daka went back?"

"I don't know," she said worriedly. "I did not sense any danger. Did you?"

"No," he said. "Do you think I should go back and help?"

"No. Your Dakara told you to stay. You must do as he says. He will explain when he returns."

Harry handed his mother the baby, then went to the caves to fetch the skins and furs to make their tents. When he returned, his mother had wrapped Coriel in her cloak and laid her down. Together, they made quick work of their shelter, then spread out the furs and tucked Coriel into bed.

Harry and his mother stayed dressed, unable to sleep until Mithrael returned. His mother lit a small candle and they sat in the tent and talked softly, listening for his father. The night rains came, but still he did not return. In the early morning, when the mists had settled over the land, Harry and his mother were still awake.

"When the mists clear," she said. "I want you to take some of the hunters and go search for your dakara. It is not like him to stay so long when he said he would return."

"Yes, Metha," he said, and changed into his deerskin in preparation.

"Watch Coriel," Elsbeth said. "I will go to the caves and get you some breakfast before you leave."

"Thank you," he said. He slipped his quiver on his back and laid his bow across his knees as he sat waiting for his mother to return. She came back shortly with fruit, cheese, and bread.

"If you cannot find him, return so that you can let the others know and we will send more people out to look. We'll also get your godfathers and Old Gray Beard to help."

"Metha, do you sense that something is wrong?"

"No, but it worries me that he has not returned."

"Don't worry, Metha. I will find him and bring him back home safe and sound."

Elsbeth smiled at her son and kissed his cheek. "Promise me that you will stay safe, my son. I do not want to have to worry about both of you."

"I promise," he said, and left the tent.

The rest of the village was just beginning to wake when Harry made his way through, asking for help from the other hunters. They gathered their weapons, made a quick stop at the cave for food, and followed him to the portal into the Human Realm.

On the other side of the portal, they found a circle of Centaurs waiting for them. "Come," they said. "Follow."

The Elves followed the Centaurs deep into the Forbidden Forest. Finally, they came to a rocky cove where many Centaurs were standing, looking down into a pit. Harry walked over to where they were and looked down also. The pit was deep, and in the darkness, he thought he made out three figures.

"Who are they?" he asked.

“Death Eaters,” answered one of the Centaurs. “Followers of Voldemort.”

“How did they get down there?” he asked. “Are they dead?”

“Yes, they are dead. They were among those who attacked us during the night,” the Centaur told him. “They killed one of our children. Some of your people came to our aid and were attacked also.”

“Where are my people who were attacked?” Harry asked.

The Centaur turned his head toward the tree line, and Harry followed his gaze. Beneath a mean shelter of branches, several Elves lay on the ground. Harry felt his heart quicken, fearful that his father might be one of them. “A-are they dead?” he asked softly.

“No. They are resting. They were wounded, but they are alive.”

Harry let out a breath of relief and looked up at the Centaur. “I am sorry for your loss,” he said. “Please give my condolences to your people. Losing a child is a terrible thing. If there is anything my people and I can do, please let me know.”

The Centaur bowed his head in acknowledgement.

“Thank you for taking care of our people,” Harry said. He followed the other Elves to the temporary shelter where the wounded men were sleeping. Looking around, he did not see his father.

“Can they be moved to our Realm?” Harry asked one of the hunters who had been examining the men.

“Yes. Most of the wounds seem minor.”

“Let’s wake them and see if they can walk to the portal.”

When the guards were awake, the hunters helped them back to the portal so they could be healed.

“Please tell my methara that I have gone to look for my dakara,” Harry told one of the hunters. “Tell her not to worry, that I will go to the Wizards and ask for their help.”

“I will tell her,” the hunter said, and passed through the portal leaving Harry alone.

Harry turned and went back to where they had left the Centaurs. They were throwing things into the pit. As Harry neared, he could hear shouts coming from inside the deep hole.

“They must have just been unconscious,” he said, walking over and looking inside. “May I talk with them?”

Then Centaurs moved back to allow Harry to speak with the prisoners.

“I am Harry Potter,” he shouted down. “Who are you?”

“Harry!” one shouted. “I am your cousin, Lucius Malfoy. Draco and Severus are down here, also.”

“Did you attack the Centaurs?” he asked.

“No, Narcissa, Draco, and I were taken by a group of Death Eaters as we left the ball. Severus was trying to help us. Your father and the Elven guards showed up, and then, the Centaurs attacked. One of the Death Eaters killed a young Centaur before they fled, but then the Centaurs turned on us. I don’t know what happened to the others, but they threw us in the pit.”

Harry turned and looked at the Centaur who seemed to be the leader. “You attacked the Elves?”

“We did not mean to harm the Elves, but some of them were injured by our arrows.”

Harry was furious. “These men in the pit are not Death Eaters! One of them is my potions professor and the other two are Elves. They are my cousins! Why have you done this?”

"Two of them had the mark," the Centaur said.

Harry shouted into the pit. "Are any of you injured?"

"Draco is hurt," Lucius said. "Can you help him?"

Harry removed his wand and levitated Draco from the pit, gently lowering him to the ground. "He is an innocent child," he said to the Centaur. "Were you going to kill him because the Death Eaters killed one of yours?"

The Centaurs did not answer. Harry levitated both Lucius and Snape out of the pit. They were bruised and bleeding, but not to the extent that Draco was.

"We'll get him to the Elves," Harry said. "My mother will heal him. Do you know where they have taken my father?"

"We did not see what happened to your father, but the Death Eaters took Narcissa." Snape said.

Harry nodded. "Then let's get Draco to the Elven Realm." He turned to the Centaurs. "My people want peace with your people," he said. "But this is not the way of allies. I am sorry that you have lost one of your children, but killing an innocent will not bring the child back. We will find those who are to blame, but we will not bring them to you for punishment for your ways are not just. However, we will punish them for the wrong they have done to your people."

He turned and led the way to the portal.

"Metha! Metha!" he shouted, running toward the village. Severus and Lucius followed more slowly, Lucius carrying his son.

All the people had gathered near Eldartha where the wounded were lying on skins. Healers were working on the wounded guards. His mother looked up when he ran into the clearing.

"What is it? Did you find your dakara?"

“No. It’s Draco. He needs help.”

His mother ran to Lucius who laid his son on the ground.

“I’m going to go get my godfathers,” he told her. “The Death Eaters have Draco’s methara, but we do not know where Daka and the other guards are.”

“You must not go,” she said as she examined Draco. “You are the one they want. The Death Eaters want your blood for the ritual. You must not allow them to take you.”

“But, Metha, Daka might be—“

“You must not go,” she said. “Listen to me, Sethrael. If you are taken, all hope is lost for our people. You must not go.”

“But what about Daka?”

“He will return. If he had been injured, he would be here with the others. I am sure that he and the other guards have gone to rescue Lolindir’s methara. He will return, Sethrael. Now, please take care of your sister so I can help our cousin.”

Harry sighed and picked up his sister, taking her away from the injured. They sat down near the lake, and Harry gave her a soft leather toy to chew on while he tossed small stones into the lake. “A lot of good it does me to be king,” he told the small child. “When Metha still bosses me around like a little boy.”

Several Merpeople stuck their heads out of the water to scold him.

“Oh, shut up,” he said, tossing a pebble in their direction. With one last disapproving look, the Merpeople sank beneath the water.

Chapter 27

Mithrael had seen in the minds of the Death Eaters where they were taking Narcissa, but it was in London, far from any forests. It would not be possible for them to take a portal, and walking was not an option. He would have to use the Wizard method of traveling by floo.

He signaled to the three guards who were with him to follow him to the portal. They came out at the woods behind Remus's house. His son's godfathers had disappeared earlier, so they were already in bed. Mithrael pounded on the door until the two sleep-deprived men opened it.

"Death Eaters attacked near the Forbidden Forest after the ball," he said. "They have taken Lucius's wife, Narcissa. I know where they have taken her, but we need to travel through your fireplace to London."

"We'll go with you," Sirius said. "Give me a few minutes to get dressed." He and Remus hurried up the stairs. They were back shortly wearing muggle trousers and shirts.

"Where do we need to go?" Remus asked, taking the pot of floo powder off the mantle.

"To the house of the Death Eater called Nott. It is in an old part of London near the Wizards' shops."

"Diagon Alley," Remus said. "We'll floo to the Leaky Cauldron then, and walk from there."

The Nott house was a large old house in a line of buildings, most of which had been turned into flats. It was in a Muggle neighborhood, but was surrounded by a tall stone wall. Muggle repellant charms were in place so that any magic that was performed in the area would not be noticed. There were few wards, and the ones in place were simple enough to disarm with little trouble. The problem was disarming them without setting off an alarm.

"Do not bother with the wards," Mithrael said.

Remus frowned. "Are you sure?"

He nodded and pointed to the branches of a tree that hung over the wall. "The guards and I will climb over the wall in the branches and drop into the garden. They will hear the alarm, but they will find nothing for we will be invisible to them. While they search, the guards will attack the Death Eaters, and I will bring out Lolindir's methara. She is in the front room of the house to the right of the opening. When I return, we must pass through the gates. Hide behind the shrubs across the path. When you see my arrow fly over the wall, use your wands to open the gates. I will bring her to you, and you can disappear with her. Leave no trace of where you go in case any escape. We will meet you at your house in the morning."

"Make sure you leave no trace," Sirius said. "Leave nothing behind that will alert the ministry that the house was attacked by Elves."

"We will be cover our tracks," Mithrael said. He motioned to the guards to follow him, and one by one, they climbed up and disappeared into the branches of the tree. Sirius and Remus walked across the street and stood behind a hedgerow, watching the gate.

Inside the wall, Mithrael took out his knife and the guards notched arrows in their bows. Mithrael stood against the wall beside the door, waiting for someone to come out while the guards found cover.

The door opened, and a tall, thin man with a black moustache appeared, wand drawn. He gazed out toward the gate, then around the garden. He stepped out on the porch and started down the steps. Suddenly, an arrow flew from behind one of the trees and pierced him in the heart. Mithrael stepped inside the house while one of the guards went to the fallen Death Eater and hid the body.

The room where Narcissa was kept was filled with Death Eaters. Mithrael softly crept into the room staying close to the wall, making no sound. Once behind Narcissa, he leaned over and whispered in her ear. "Do not be afraid. I am an Elf and have come to rescue you."

Narcissa sat very still, with the exception of a small nod to let him know that she understood. Mithrael took her upper arm and gently pulled her to a standing position. Quietly, he led her behind the chair until she was against the wall. Little by little, they made their way to the door.

“They cannot see you,” Mithrael whispered, seeing her confusion. “They think you are still sitting in the chair.”

Narcissa nodded and followed him out of the room and the opened front door. Mithrael notched an arrow in his bow and sent it over the gate. When the gate opened, he lifted Narcissa in his arms and sprinted out of the garden and across the street where Sirius and Remus were waiting.

“We are not finished here,” he told them. “Take her to your home, and I will meet you there tomorrow.”

Sirius and Remus disappeared with Narcissa in tow, and Mithrael went back inside the gate. Some of the Death Eaters were outside now, looking for intruders. Remaining invisible, the Elves began firing their arrows, moving from tree to tree, dodging spells. Mithrael went back into the house where Nott and two other Death Eaters waited.

Mithrael walked behind one of the Death Eaters and slit his throat with his knife, then quickly killed the second one, leaving Nott alone.

“He’s under an invisibility spell!” shouted a high-pitched voice behind Nott. “Kill him!”

“I can’t see him!” cried Nott, turning in all directions, shouting “Avada Kedavra!” every few feet.

That is when Mithrael saw the face of Voldemort on the back of Nott’s head. Crouching behind the desk, he raised his bow and aimed for Nott’s heart.

“Noooooooo!” Mithrael could hear Voldemort screaming in his mind as his soul left the dead Death Eater and moved toward the desk, looking for the one who had killed him. Mithrael lay flat on the ground,

sliding beneath the front of the desk, then against the wall and behind a chair.

“I know you are here; I can sense your magic,” Voldemort said, then laughed. “I will find you, and you will be my next host.”

Mithrael thought of the spells his son had taught him. He needed a diversion so he could leave the room. Raising his hand, he sent a vase flying from the mantle to crash into the opposite wall.

The Dark Wizard laughed. “There you are,” he said, moving toward the Elf. “If you had wanted to stay hidden, you should not have used magic.”

Mithrael jumped up and ran out of the room, followed closely by Voldemort. He dashed out the front door and leapt off the porch, not bothering to take the steps, then sped toward the gate. Before he got there, however, he felt an icy presence trying to invade his mind.

Mithrael shut his mind tightly, not allowing the presence to enter. The soul of the Dark Wizard entered his body, and Mithrael dropped to the ground, screaming. He had never felt such pain—had never felt such darkness. “Elohanmi!” he screamed “Elohanmi!”

Suddenly, the spirit burst out of his body, shouting in pain and anger. “You have his blood!” it accused furiously. “Who are you? Damn you, what are you?”

Mithrael lay panting on the ground, looking up at the evil presence of Voldemort. “I am the Defender of Light,” he said. “I am your enemy, and I will see you dead, for there is no Light in you.”

Voldemort laughed. “I cannot die, Elf!”

“Oh, you will die, Dark One. Even your soul will die for it cannot cross over into the Summerland. You have destroyed your only chance to live forever.”

Voldemort’s spirit gazed at the Elf for a moment, then disappeared. The guards came out of hiding and helped him to stand.

"Are you all right?" one asked.

Mithrael nodded, looking around at the destruction on the lawn. "We must cover our trail," he said. He raised his hand, and all the arrows the Elves had shot flew into this hand. He grinned. "I learned that from my son."

The other Elves laughed, and one raised his hand showing the others the head of one of the Death Eaters. "It is the one who killed the young Centaur," he said. "We will take it to them so they will know that he was punished."

Mithrael nodded, "It is good that the Centaurs are avenged. We must move the Death Eaters inside and destroy the house so the ministry will not be able to detect that this was done by Elves."

The others agreed, knowing that Wizards had laws to protect the evil ones from those whom they had wronged. Wizards had strange ideas of justice. However, the rest of the magical world ignored this and carried out their own methods of justice, making sure they left no evidence for the Wizards to find.

Together, they piled the bodies into the room where Mithrael had found Narcissa, then set the room on fire. As the loud sirens from the Muggle carriages came nearer, the Elves left the Nott property and began their long walk to the nearest forest.

It was almost noon when Mithrael, the guards, Sirius, Remus and Narcissa entered the Elven Realm. When Harry saw his father, he ran to him, wrapped his arms tightly around him, and rested his head against his chest.

Mithrael felt his son's trembling and held him close. "I am well, Seth," he said gently.

"It is good you are home, Daka," Harry said. "Metha was worried."

Mithrael smiled. "It is good that my brave son was here to keep her calm," he said, laying his cheek on top of his son's head, giving Harry time to regain his composure.

After a few moments, Harry took a deep breath and pulled away. "What happened, Daka? Where were you? Why did you not come home last night?"

"I will tell you everything later, but first I must talk with Queen Thespa. Please take our cousin Narcissa to her son."

Reluctantly, Harry left his father to take Narcissa to where Draco and Lucius were being cared for, and Mithrael went to find the Queen.

"You have returned," she said when he approached her.

"Yes, and I have come to ask for the Ritual of Purification."

The Queen frowned. "What has happened?"

"The Dark Wizard entered my body, trying to possess me, but was unable to stay because I carry the blood of Sethrael, but I have been defiled by his darkness."

"Then of course you must go through the ritual. My nephew and his friend the Potions Master carry his mark. Perhaps they will participate in the ritual with you."

Mithrael nodded. "I will make the offer, but first I must talk with my family so they will know what has happened to me."

He found his family sitting with the Malfoys, the Potions Master, and Seth's godfathers. He leaned down and kissed his wife, then took his daughter in his arms and sat down beside his son. Draco was now conscious. He was lying on the ground with his head in his mother's lap.

"I must speak with you about something," Mithrael said. "The Death Eaters who attacked you have been punished. The Centaurs have

been avenged. We have given them proof, and they are satisfied." He took a medallion from around his neck and handed it to his son.

"It is a gift from the Centaur Chief. To wear it is a sign of honor. He wanted me to give this to our young King who rebuked him for his poor judgment. He has taken the medallion from his own neck to give to the one who reminded him that he must lead with honor and justice."

Harry held the medal in his hands for a moment, and then placed it around his neck. "I will thank the Centaur Chief when I see him again."

Mithrael shook his head. "It would be best not to mention it again. The Chief has lost his honor and must regain it. It would shame him to have it mentioned again."

Harry nodded and tucked the medallion under his shirt. "I will not mention it, Daka."

And then Mithrael told them of all that had happened since he left them in the Forbidden Forest after the ball. "Because I have been defiled by the Dark Wizard, I am to go through the Ritual of Purification." He let his gaze fall on the two former Death Eaters. "You may participate, also, if you wish. It will cleanse you of the darkness from the mark and your past actions. It is not an easy ritual, but when you have completed it, you will no longer bear the Dark Wizard's mark."

"I would like to participate," Snape said without hesitation.

Lucius turned to his wife and son. "Would you have me go through the ritual? The Death Eaters know that I'm a half-blood and no longer in agreement with their cause."

"Yes, Father. Please go through the ritual," Draco said. "To be rid of the Dark Mark would help restore our family's reputation."

Narcissa nodded. "The Dark Lord knows, Lucius. The Mark won't save you from him. Go through the ritual."

"Then I would also like to participate," Lucius said to Mithrael.

"May I speak with you alone for a moment?" Remus asked.

Mithrael stood and walked with Remus away from the small group. "Would the ritual rid me of my darkness?" he asked.

Mithrael nodded. "It would. However, it is more dangerous for you, for you must battle the dark side of your nature, and you must do it alone, for it is also dangerous for anyone who goes with you. If you choose to do it, you must wait until the new moon when the wolf is weaker and you are stronger. Remus, you must be in good health before you do it, for the ritual could kill you."

Remus nodded thoughtfully. "I will think about it, then, but I know that I will want to do it before long. The longer I wait, the more strength the wolf pulls from me. If I wait much longer, I won't ever be strong enough."

"The new moon is in three weeks. During that time, eat well and regain your strength. When the time comes, I will stand in the shadows in the Realm of El so you will not be alone."

Remus smiled. "You are a good friend, Mithrael."

AN: Including this one, there are 3 more chapters in this story. I am posting them all at once so you can read them at one time, if you wish. I am not planning to write a sequel, but I hope you will read my next one, which is still in the planning stages. Thank you for reading, and special thanks to all who reviewed. Sincerely, MadScribbler

Chapter 28

The Ritual of Purification began with a 24 hour fast. Since none of them had eaten since the feast at the ball the night before, they would be able to perform the ritual that night. The participants were allowed to drink water, but no food or any other drink could be consumed until the ritual was completed. They spent the day in quiet meditation, gathering herbs in the forest and digging for crystals in a cave. They gathered sage leaves and cedar branches, and then took all that they had found to the Elders who would prepare them for the ritual.

At midnight, the three men entered the forest near the portal. A small dome-shaped tent had been built nearby. The skeleton was made of willow branches, which bent to form the shape of the tent. It was covered in skins. There was a small opening facing East that was so low to the ground that one would have to crawl through on hands and knees.

Harry was tending a fire, which flamed from a pit. Inside, lava rocks were being heated. Fire-Keeper was a very special duty during the ritual, and Harry was taking his job seriously.

There was an Elf sitting near the tent, holding a small drum on his lap. Two Elves with flutes sat near him. A group of children were also there, along with all of the Elders.

A staff had been stuck in the ground beside the opening of the tent. Beneath it was a mound of Earth with a flat top, shaped like a small table.

The three men stripped out of their clothes and laid them on the ground. Elder Sareth gave them the crystals and herbs they had gathered earlier. The crystals had been cleansed and the herbs tied with string.

Mithrael went to the opening of the tent and knelt. He placed the crystals and herbs on the mound and asked, "May I enter, Mother?"

From inside the tent came a female voice, which said, "Welcome, my son."

Mithrael crawled into the opening. The other two men followed his example, and the three of them found themselves in the dark tent.

The drum began to sound the rhythm of a soft heartbeat. The flutes began a slow, soft melody. Then the children began to sing:

Enter the womb of the Mother

Be healed and be born again

The Mother comforts the wounded

The Mother creates new life

Inside the tent, near the opening, a small pit had been dug. Harry entered carrying a hot rock on deer antlers and placed it in the pit.

"Welcome, Mother," the female Elder inside the tent said.

"Welcome, Mother," the participants repeated.

Harry left the tent and brought 6 more rocks, one at a time. When he had brought in the seventh, he took some sweet smelling resin from his pouch and sprinkled it over the rocks. Then he and the female Elder left the tent and closed the flap.

A bucket of water had been left inside. Mithrael reached into the bucket and poured water over the hot rocks, and steam began to rise. He took a sprig of sage leaves and began to sprinkle them over the hot rocks. The strong, pungent odor of myrrh and sage filled the tent.

Outside, the drum beat out the rhythm of their hearts; the flutes continued their sweet melody, and the children sang. Inside, the heat and steam rose and the men began to sweat. It became difficult to

breathe, and after a while the participants lay down on the cool dirt floor of the tent, trying to breathe in cooler air.

It was impossible to tell how long they had been inside, but when the men thought they would pass out, the flap opened, allowing a cool breeze to pass over their hot skin.

“Come out, children,” Elder Sareth said. “And wash away your impurities.”

Mithrael crawled out of the tent on his hands and knees, followed by Lucius then Severus. Outside, the Elders took a bucket of sage water and poured it over the men.

“Now, you must face your darkness,” Elder Sareth said. “Enter the Realm of El and through the River of Purification to the Island of Souls where you will be met by your mothers.”

Elder Kasha opened the portal, and the three men entered the Realm of El. Despite their weakness, they walked down the hill into the valley below. Instead of crossing the footbridge onto the island, Mithrael waded into the river, and then began to swim across. Lucius and Severus followed his example.

In the middle of the river, they each confronted their own demons. It was a private battle waged between each individual and the darkness in their own hearts.

Mithrael dealt with the guilt he felt over being the only survivor of his family. His parents and sister had been killed when he was a small child, and although he was too young to fight the Death Eaters who had killed them, he remembered the helplessness he felt watching them die. He, too, had been left for dead, but the curse had missed him. Yet, he had fallen, pretending to be dead until they left. Then, he had left his family behind and made his way to the portal to get help from the Elves.

Severus battled his regret over having become a Death Eater and his jealousy of James Potter. He had loved Lily since he was a child, but she had chosen the man whom Severus had hated. He had even lost

her friendship when he became a Death Eater. He regretted the torture and murders of innocent victims he had committed to keep his position as a spy for Dumbledore a secret. He had also killed his hated father after the man had murdered his mother, but he did not regret that act. To him, it was justice. He did, however, regret that his path to violence began at such a young age.

Lucius had to battle his hatred, for it consumed him. It was stronger than any other feeling, including love for his family. He hated his father, and he hated the Dark Lord for forcing him to crawl; for torturing him with the Cruciatus curse; for taking away his pride. He hated himself most of all for becoming a Death Eater for no other reason than to please the man who had killed his mother. Lucius also had to battle his lust for power. Power was the one thing that could make him forget that he had ever had to crawl before another—first his father, then the Dark Lord. Lucius's battle was the hardest fought, for he did not know how to let go of those feelings. Yet, he desired it with all his heart. He wanted to be a new man, one that his son and wife could respect.

At last, Mithrael waded out of the river onto the Island of Souls. His mother met him on the bank, wrapped him in a warm cloak, and led him down the path to the cove. They sat on a bench where she wrapped him in her arms as she had done when he was a child.

"You have done well, my son," she said. "You have cleansed your soul of darkness. It is good you had the encounter with the Dark Wizard's spirit, or you would not have come this path."

Mithrael nodded. "You are right," he said. "I have hidden my feelings deep inside. It was not until he entered my body that I remembered my own darkness."

"You are a good man; a good dakara," she said. "You have taught your son well, and you love both of your children."

"They are my heart," he said. "Elsbeth and my children are my life."

They looked up to see Severus enter the cove with his own mother. He was weeping openly. Mithrael turned his attention back to his mother so as not to embarrass the emotional man.

“When your son comes next to visit his first parents,” his mother said. “Allow your family to visit you, my son. You have put away the guilt, now. Let us spend time together in happiness.”

“I will, Methara. And I will bring my entire family, except for Coriel. She is still too young to enter the Realm of El.”

It was quite some time before Lucius finally entered the cove with his mother. Mithrael was surprised by the change. The man no longer looked the same. His face had softened and there was no hint of the cruelty or haughtiness that had been there before.

“He has won his battle,” his mother said. “All three of you have, my son. It is a good day. Your people will welcome you back with a feast.”

“I look forward to the feast,” he said. “It has been a while since I have eaten.”

It was morning before the three men returned to the Elven Realm. As they stepped out of the portal, their families met them.

Narcissa was now dressed in the usual Elf fashion with doe skin trousers, tunic, and boots. Her long hair was braided down her back and she wore no make up. Lucius had never seen her look more beautiful.

Draco was still bruised, but he was standing and looking well. He, too, had donned his usual summer wear, looking happier than Lucius had seen him in the past year.

The three men dressed, and then were led by their families to the cove where a large breakfast was awaiting them. The entire village was there to share in the feast with those who had gone through the ritual. It was a festive affair with music and storytelling after the meal.

Severus and Lucius no longer wore the mark of the Dark Wizard. Their forearms were clean and held no sign that it had ever been there. Severus could not wait to return home to show Albus. He hoped the old man would be pleased. It would, however, prevent him from ever spying again should the Dark Lord return. But, for Severus, that was not a bad thing.

After breakfast, Harry attended lessons with his godfathers and then with the Elders. He was learning the rituals, and his grandmother hoped that they could be performed before he had to go back to Hogwarts. The Dark Lord was trying hard to find someone to help him perform the ritual to give him a body, and the Elves wanted him destroyed before he succeeded. Yet, it all came down to Harry. He was still a child, but he had reached the magical maturity of an adult. If he could learn the rituals and enough spells to defend himself against the Dark Lord, his task could be completed.

After his lessons with the Elders, his father worked with him on practicing with his sword. This was Harry's favorite part of the day, with the exception of hunting. He loved the time he spent alone with his father. To him, Mithrael was everything a man should be. He was strong, gentle, brave, wise, and loving. He was slow to anger but quick to laughter. He was a good leader and a good provider. Everyone liked Mithrael, and Harry wanted to be just like him.

"Seth, let's rest awhile," Mithrael said. "I am tired from my lack of sleep and the ritual."

Harry placed his sword in his scabbard, and then they lay side by side beside the lake, staring up at the clouds.

"I'm glad you weren't hurt yesterday, Daka. If the Dark Wizard had possessed you like he did Professor Quirrell, you might have died."

Mithrael put his arm around his son's shoulders and drew him near so Harry could rest his head on his chest. "Your blood protected me," he said. "The Dark Wizard could not stay in a body filled with so much love. It is in our blood, Seth. The love your first mother gave you; the

love you have for me and your methara and sister; and the love we have for you.”

“I do love you, Daka. I couldn’t stand it if something happened to you.”

“I know, my son. And I will do all that I can to make sure you do not lose me, and I want you to do all you can to make sure I do not lose you, because I could not stand it if something happened to you.”

Harry looked up into his father’s eyes. “I will stay safe for you, Daka. I promise.”

His father smiled, and they spent the rest of the afternoon napping by the lake.

The summer passed quickly for Harry. He had not had the time to relax as he usually did, or hunt with his father. It had been a summer of learning, and he was ready for it to end. But there was one thing he had to do before he could return to school. He had to attempt to vanquish the Dark Wizard.

The Elven women spent the next three weeks feeding Remus protein and carbohydrates so he would be ready for his battle with the wolf. On the night of the new moon, Remus went through the Ritual of Purification. Mithrael waited for him on the Island of Souls, shrouded in invisibility, watching from the shadows. It was a difficult battle for Remus, but he came through the ritual whole, no longer a werewolf. For the first time since he was a child, he felt healthy and looked forward to the night of the full moon. Sirius said that Padfoot would miss Moony, but Remus said he reckoned the old dog would get over it.

After Remus’s ritual, the village allowed themselves a full day of rest in preparation for the rituals that would come next. It would begin the next evening with the Gathering of Souls. There was a small piece of Voldemort’s soul that resided in Harry, making him the only one who could call the soul pieces together. That piece of soul could not be extracted until the first ritual was over.

After the first ritual was completed, Harry would have to go through his own Purification Ritual to remove the soul piece residing in his body and trapping it with the others. For this purpose, the Elders were using a Soul Glass, which was a special mirror that would trap and hold souls until released. All the parts of Voldemort's soul would be collected and held in the Soul Glass, then joined with the one that was roaming the Human Realm.

And then the final and most difficult ritual would be performed. The Joining Ritual was the one in which he would rejoin all the pieces of Voldemort's soul, making him whole. And then Voldemort's soul would cross the River of Purification on his way to the Summerland, either of his own free will or by force.

Chapter 29

The Gathering of Souls

August twenty-fifth was a day of fasting and meditation for the Elves in preparation for the rituals that would take place that evening. Harry spent the day dividing his time between talking with his family and sitting in the branches of Eldartha, asking her for her wisdom. So many things could go wrong, and he knew that he would have to think quickly. In this, Eldartha was his source of strength for she would lend knowledge and wisdom to those who asked.

“I will be with you tonight,” Mithrael told him. “I will not leave your side, my son. There is nothing to fear, for I will not allow harm to come to you.” And that was the source of his courage. He knew that with his father beside him, he could do anything.

As the sun went down, Harry walked out of the Elven Realm into the Forbidden Forest. His parents, grandparents, godparents, cousins, and all the Elders followed him. Albus Dumbledore, Severus Snape, and the Minister of Magic were waiting for him, along with several aurors, including Shacklebolt, Moody, and Amelia Bones. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, with their three older sons, the Centaur Chief and his warriors, Ragnok and his goblins, and the Hogwarts House Elves were also there.

Harry could not imagine why so many were present at this ritual, but his father told him that they wanted to make sure that the Dark Wizard was gone. He wondered if they realized that the ritual would take more than the evening to complete.

The Elders surrounded Harry and his father—who insisted on being in the circle with him—with a ring of herbs, salt, and sage. They left a small space open in which they placed the Soul Glass and covered it with dirt. It was impossible for the souls to pass through the herbs to get to Harry, so they would have to pass over the soul glass, and when they did, they would be sucked into it.

Outside the circle of herbs, Dumbledore placed runes with his wand. Some were for protection; others were for what he called ‘soul

attraction.' Harry was not sure whether that was good or bad. He didn't want any souls other than Voldemort's trying to get in the circle. Dumbledore told him not to worry about it.

Harry sat cross-legged in the circle with Mithrael behind him. When the ritual started, his father would become invisible so the soul pieces would think that only a child sat in the circle. The box with Tom Riddle's diary had been brought out of the Realm of El and placed just outside the circle.

The other people who were watching surrounded themselves with herbs, salt, and sage so they would be in no danger of being possessed by any of the pieces of soul. The Elders would make the entire group invisible when the ritual started.

When everything was ready, one of the Elders began to beat out a heart-rhythm on the drum. Harry cleared his thoughts. Mithrael became invisible to all but the other Elves. When he was ready, Harry raised his hands, keeping his eyes closed, and began the ritual.

Elohanmi! Elmithmi! Elsethmi!

Give me control of the broken soul within me

Keep my own soul safe inside me

Let me speak through the soul of Tom Riddle

Elohanmi! Elmithmi! Elsethmi!

Harry continued the chant until he felt the scar burning on his forehead. The Elf stopped the drumbeat, and all was silent.

Satras thetus hothet

Hear me, Soul of Tom Riddle

Hear me, and obey my command

Souls lost in darkness

Hidden in man's creation

Broken pieces without life

Hear my call

Feel my desire

Come to me

Come, and be made whole

Satras thetus hothet

Come, Soul of Tom Riddle

Heed the calling of your soul

Feel your soul within me

Feel it reaching out to you

Feel your soul in a living body

Come, live again Tom Riddle

Come to me.

Come to be mended

Come, and be made whole

Satras thetus hothet

The box containing the diary began to shake, and suddenly the image of a young Tom Riddle appeared over the box.

"Who calls me?" he asked.

“Your soul calls, Tom Riddle. Come, join with me and live again.”

“What is your name?”

“My name will be Tom Riddle when we are together again.”

Cautiously, the spirit from the diary began to move toward the circle. Avoiding the herbs, it started through the open path and, before it could realize it was a trap, was immediately sucked into the mirror.

Harry let out a sigh of relief, and then continued the ritual, calling for the soul pieces of Tom Riddle.

Three hours later, six soul pieces were trapped in the Soul Glass. Only the one in Harry and the one that still roamed the Human Realm were left. Harry had to trap Voldemort’s soul before he could perform the Ritual of Purification, but he was tired, hoarse, his scar was bleeding, and he needed to relieve himself.

He stood up and started toward the opening. “Can I leave the circle this way?”

Suddenly, his father grabbed him from behind. “If you walk across the Soul Glass, the piece of Voldemort’s soul inside you will be ripped out and sucked into the mirror, and you will be dead.”

Harry’s face paled as he realized how close he had come to dying. “But Dada,” he whispered. “I have to pee!”

His father chuckled. “Then you must do it in the circle.”

Harry glanced over at the crowd of onlookers. “I can’t do it in front of them,” he whispered.

His father went to the edge of the circle and dug out a hole, piling the dirt to the side, then stood up and turned to the audience. “Could my son have a bit of privacy for a few moments?” he asked.

Since the audience could not leave their circle, they turned their heads or closed their eyes. Embarrassed, but in dire need, Harry

relieved himself in the hole his father had dug, and then brushed the dirt on top of it. "Thanks, Daka," he said. "I feel much better now."

His father gave him a drink of water from the canteen on his belt. "Rest a moment, then you can start again," he said. Mithrael poured some of the water into his hand and cleaned the blood from his son's forehead. Harry rested for a short time, and then began the ritual to bring Voldemort to him.

Satras thetus hothet

Hear me, Soul of Lord Voldemort

Hear me, and follow my voice

I have your soul within me

The broken piece of soul you gave me

The power you left me

The power to be as great as you

The power to talk to snakes

The power to see into your thoughts

Hear my call

Feel my desire

Come to me

Come and join with me

And we will be one

And we will be strong

And we will be powerful

And we will rule the world

Come, Soul of Lord Voldemort

Heed the calling of your soul

Feel your soul within me

Feel it reaching out to you

Feel your soul in a living body

Come, live again Lord Voldemort

Come and live forever

Come to me.

Satras thetus hothet

"If you desire to join with me, why do you protect yourself in the circle of herbs?" the soul of Lord Voldemort asked.

"I do not desire to join with you, Lord Voldemort. I desire to rule with your power. Come and give me the rest of it. You will have a body, and I will have the power."

The Dark Lord laughed. "Do you think you could control me, little boy?"

"I am powerful. I have the magic you gave me."

"You have only a small piece of my power. You know nothing of what I am. You will never have the power that I have."

"I have the same power as you, but I am younger and stronger. I will be able to control you."

"You're a fool, boy. You know that I can't possess you because of the blood ritual performed by your mother."

Harry frowned. "You can't possess my body?" He looked thoughtful for a moment, and then grinned as if realization had just struck. "Then I am more powerful than you."

Voldemort laughed again. "You think you are protected because of the herbs. You think I cannot come inside the circle, but you are wrong. Like a fool, you have broken the circle."

Harry looked down at the opening of the circle as if he were seeing it for the first time, and then shrugged. "So? You can't hurt me. You can't possess me, so what does it matter if you can enter the circle?" He gave Voldemort a haughty look. "What could you possibly do to me? I am the Child of Prophecy, and you're nothing but a tiny piece of disembodied spirit."

"Child of Prophecy!" he spat. "You're a foolish child."

"Go away," Harry said, waving his hands as if shooing an animal. "If you can't make me more powerful, then leave. Go haunt a house or something, stupid ghost." He laughed. "I doubt you can even rattle a chain like a proper ghost."

In a rage, Voldemort's soul flew to the opening of the circle and, with a scream of horror, was immediately sucked into the Soul Glass with the other soul pieces.

Harry stood pale and trembling in the circle, blood running from his scar down his face. His father wrapped his arms around him and held him close while the Elders broke the circles. Elder Sareth picked up the Soul Glass and wrapped it in a silk cloth.

"It is time for the Ritual of Purification," she said.

Together, the group walked to the portal to take them into the Elven Realm. The House Elves could not enter, for they were bound by Wizards to be unable to enter the Realm that was once their home. They stopped at the portal and sat down to wait.

Queen Elsbeth stopped before the portal and turned to speak to the group. "The next ritual is a private ritual for Sethrael and his family. We will need a few Wizards with wands to help control the Soul Glass, but the final ritual will not be until tomorrow evening. You are all welcome to stay in our Realm, but if you wish to meet by the portal tomorrow at dusk, we will open the portal to allow you in to witness the final ritual."

The House Elves, the Centaurs, and the Goblins decided to come back the next evening at dusk. All of the Wizards wanted to help with the Ritual of Purification, so they entered the Elven Realm with the Elves.

The older children had prepared the domed tent, and Draco had been selected to be the Fire-Keeper. He heated the lava rocks in the pit while the Wizards were taken into the Realm of El. Their duty was to stand on the bridge and wait for the soul of Voldemort to leave Harry when he was in the River of Purification. If those in the river did not capture the soul, they would then levitate the Soul Glass in its path to trap it in the mirror. It would be a difficult thing to accomplish because there was no way to contain the soul piece in a small area, and it would try to get as far away from the River of Purification as possible.

The four Weasley men, Dumbledore, Moody, Shacklebolt, Draco and Sirius were the Wizards to stand on the bridge. Sirius was upset that he could not go through the river with Harry, but the Elders said that only those who had recently fought the battle of darkness in their own souls would be able to enter the water. So, to Sirius's disappointment, only Remus, Snape, Lucius, and Mithrael would accompany Harry on his journey.

Because they needed their strength, the four who would swim the waters with him could not go into the tent. However, his mother left Coriel with Mrs. Weasley and entered with her son. When the rocks were in place and the flap was closed, Elsbeth sprinkled water over the hot rocks and scattered sage across it. When the tent got too hot to sit up, Harry laid his head on his mother's lap. Elsbeth had not undressed as her son had, so her clothes were sticking to her body,

but she ignored the heat and ran her fingers through her son's wet hair until the flap was opened and they could leave.

Harry crawled out of the tent, and the sage water was poured over him. His father helped him through the portal into the Realm of El.

Severus carried the mirror, still covered with the silk cloth. Neither the cloth nor the mirror could get wet or the waters from the River of Purification would cause the souls in the glass to escape. He could not uncover it until the soul had withdrawn from Harry's body, so he had to keep it covered and dry even while wading through the deep waters.

Before Harry had reached the middle of the river, he began to scream. The soul piece inside him seemed to be in a panic, and the pain was unbearable. The soul did not know whether to leave or stay, so Mithrael grabbed Harry and dunked him beneath the water, causing the soul piece to flee. Severus, who had been ready, ripped off the silk and held the mirror in the path of the soul, but the wraith changed course and flew upwards, then toward the valley leading to the portal.

Snape held up the Soul Glass, and Dumbledore levitated it with his wand. The mirror flew toward the ghost, but again the soul changed course.

In the river, Harry had passed out. Mithrael and Remus were trying to get him to the shore. Severus held up the silk cloth, and Sirius levitated it to the bridge so, when the soul was captured, it could be covered once more.

"Professor," Draco said. "Let me try. I think that my skills as a seeker could come in handy right now."

Dumbledore allowed Draco to take over the levitation. He turned the mirror on its side and whipped it around. It flew like a surfboard behind the spirit, then dove underneath it in an arch and rose directly in front of it. Before the spirit could change direction, it was sucked into the Soul Glass.

The Wizards on the bridge cheered as Draco gently levitated the mirror to the bridge. From the river, his father grinned and gave him a thumbs-up. Sirius grabbed it when it was within reach and wrapped it in the silk cloth. He looked up at Draco and grinned, "Good job, Cousin. I couldn't have done better myself."

Lily stood on the shore of the island, waiting for her son. When Severus saw her, he almost turned back, but she smiled and waved to him, so he continued forward. When they reached the shore, Mithrael and Remus carried Harry to his mother, laying him at her feet. She knelt down beside him and began to stroke his face and speak softly to him.

After a few moments, Harry opened his eyes and looked up at his mother. He raised his hand to his scar. There was no more pain. He smiled at her. "Did I make it?"

She laughed. "You made it," she said. "Come, Sweetheart. Let me wrap you in this cloak. You're shivering."

Mithrael helped his son to stand, then backed away so he could be with his mother. They waited a moment before following them to the cove.

Chapter 30

The Joining

The breakfast feast that took place the next morning in the Elven Realm was a memorable event. Like the one before, it was a day of celebration. The guests were invited into the circle after breakfast to tell their own stories. Mr. Weasley told of his meeting with his wife's brothers on the Island of Souls and how they would be at the Joining Ritual in the evening. "It is Heaven, Molly! It is truly Heaven!" Mrs. Weasley wept with joy at the prospect of seeing her brothers once again.

Elsbeth had a tent waiting for her son so that he could sleep. He needed to regain his strength for the final ritual that would take place at dusk. She only woke him for lunch, then allowed him to go back to sleep. In the evening, supper was another feast, and Harry ate everything his stomach would hold.

At dusk, Queen Elsbeth opened the portals for the magical creatures that wished to witness the last ritual to enter the Elven Realm. The House Elves stood at the portal, watching sadly as all the others entered.

"Wait here," the Queen told them. "We may be able to find a way for you to enter."

She disappeared through the portal to return a few moments later with Harry, Lucius, and Dumbledore. Just then, Percy, who had gone to retrieve his younger brothers and sister, ran toward the group followed by Fred, George, Ron, Ginny, and Hermione.

"We made it!" Ron said, breathing heavily.

Harry grinned at them. "Barely," he said, hugging his friends. "Wait here for a moment, then we shall enter." He turned to the group of House Elves that were waiting.

Dobby was in the front of the group, and when Harry had appeared, all the House Elves had knelt. Harry walked over to Dobby and knelt in front of him.

“Do you wish to be free, Dobby?” Harry asked.

The Elf looked up into his King’s eyes. His own were filled with tears. “Yes, King Sethrael. Dobby wishes to be free.”

Harry turned to Lucius. “Give him a piece of your clothing,” he instructed.

Lucius took off his belt and knelt in front of Dobby. He wrapped it around the waist of the House Elf about six times before buckling it. “You are now a free Elf, Dobby,” he said, and the House Elf burst into tears.

Harry took Dobby’s face between his hands and looked into his eyes. “The season has not yet come for the freedom of our brothers and sisters, but because you truly desire to be free, I believe we can break your bonds of forgetfulness. Look into my eyes, my brother, and remember.”

Harry sent images of the Realm of Elves into Dobby’s mind. He showed him the image of Mithrael. “This is what you are,” he said. “See how tall and beautiful you are. Remember the thrill of the hunt. Remember the joy of freedom. Remember the wisdom of Eldartha. Remember your people. Remember the Realm of El. It is in your mind, my brother. The memories have passed down to you from your ancestors.”

As Harry continued to send images into his mind, Dobby began to change. His face became longer and slimmer. His eyes began to get smaller, forming into the almond shape of the Elves. The color slowly changed to silver. His ears got smaller with small points at the top. Hair and brows began to grow. The color of his skin faded into a healthy pink. Slowly, he grew taller and taller, and Harry had to reach up to continue holding his face.

Finally Harry stood and reached out his hand. "Arise and enter the Realm of your people. Welcome home, my brother."

Dobby stood and looked down at his body. He was now a tall, slender, handsome Elf with long pale hair and beautiful silver eyes. He unfastened the belt, which was not too tight and draped it around his neck. "I remember," he said. "And I shall need a new name. Dobby is the name of a slave."

"I would be honored to give you a name," Harry said. "Our people will call you Correth, which means Heart of the Lion. You have shown much courage by overcoming the bonds and wishing for freedom."

Correth bowed his head. "I am honored, King Sethrael, and I will endeavor to live up to my name."

"You already have, my brother. Go, now. Enter the Realm of Elves."

Correth entered his home for the first time in his life. Hermione and Ginny wiped tears from their eyes.

Harry turned to the others. "Are there any of you who wish to have their freedom now?" he asked.

None stepped forward, for the bonds of slavery were too strong in them. They would have to wait until the Season of Freedom to become a true Elf.

Harry gave them a gentle smile. "Do not be discouraged, brothers and sisters," he said. "I am surprised that even Dobby was able to overcome the bonds. The Season is upon us, and before long, you, too, will walk into the Realm of Elves. It is my promise to you." He bowed to them, then turned, and entered the portal. The Queen, Witches, and Wizards followed him, closing the portal that led into their Realm.

To the confusion of all who were present, except for the Elves, the Ritual began with a funeral for Lord Voldemort.

The Soul Glass was laid on a bier beneath Eldartha and covered with a purple silk cloth. The Elves gathered in a circle around it and began to toss flowers and handfuls of dirt onto the bier. As they did, the children sang.

Rest now, our brother

Enter the womb of the Mother

Be healed and be born again

The Mother comforts the wounded
The Mother creates new life

Weep not, Children of El

For our brother is only sleeping

He sleeps before his birthing

He sleeps in the womb of the Mother

He shall be born again.

Rejoice, Children of Light

For in the Realm of El

All darkness shall be erased

Our brother will have a new body

He shall enter the Summerland.

Laugh, Children of El

For in the Summerland

Our brother will live forever

Our brother will be with his people

Our brother will live in joy.

Sirius turned to Remus and whispered, "Is it just me, or do you think we're being a little hypocritical by attending the funeral of the most evil bastard that's ever lived?"

Remus snorted, then quickly covered his mouth with his hand. "Don't start, Sirius. At least he's going to be dead."

"That's my point!" Sirius whispered back. "I'm glad he's going to be dead, and they're singing all happy-happy-dark-lord-live-forever!"

"It's their culture. Just shut up and go along with it."

Sirius rolled his eyes, but kept quiet.

"I'm with you, Sirius," Mr. Weasley whispered from behind him. Sirius turned and grinned at him, and then started to make a comment, but an elbow to his side from Remus made him turn back around and behave.

Harry and Queen Thespa walked to the front of the group. At the Queen's signal, the Elders raised the bier, and the children formed a line. The children followed the King and Queen to the portal, followed by the Elders carrying the Soul Glass on the bier. All the other Elves joined the line, and then the visitors.

They approached the portal, and then entered the Realm of El. The children continued singing as they slowly walked down the hill into the valley, then over the footbridge and onto the island. They took the well-worn path to the cove where the souls of Elves and of Voldemort's victims awaited.

The bier was placed in the center of the cove, and everyone formed a circle around it. Harry, wearing a white robe trimmed with gold, his sword, and his crown, stepped inside the circle. And then the Elders scattered a circle of salt, sage, and herbs around him and the bier as they had done the night before. This time, however, they made a path

leading from the circle to the River of Purification on the Summerland side of the island.

When they were finished, the Elders joined the others outside the circle. Harry went to the bier and lifted the purple cloth, uncovering the Soul Glass. He drew his sword and backed away from the bier.

Holding the sword in both hands, he raised the tip skyward and called out:

“Elohanmi! Elmithmi! Elsethmi!”

As it had on the day he received his sword, a bolt of lightening appeared from the heavens and struck its tip. The Wizards and Witches in the crowd gasped or screamed in fear.

“Do not be afraid,” Harry said, lowering his sword. “It is El who touches the sword.”

He pointed the tip of his sword toward the Soul Glass. “Soul of Tom Riddle known as Lord Voldemort. Hear me! The pieces of your broken soul are trapped in the Soul Glass. There they will stay forever in the Realm of El. However, if your will allow me to reunite the pieces of your soul, I will free you from the Soul Glass. Show yourself in the mirror and give me your answer.”

The face of the Dark Lord appeared in the mirror. “I will allow you to reunite my soul,” he said.

Harry aimed his sword at the glass. “El ohan mi! Seth isa satra! Thetus isas hothet! Kreeah isa ona!” A bolt of lightening emerged from the tip of the sword and shattered the Soul Glass, forcing the soul of Voldemort, which was now reunited, out of the mirror.

Harry and Voldemort stood in the circle facing each other. Harry raised his sword and pointed it at the Dark Lord. Voldemort looked around at the people who were standing on the outside.

“What is this?” he asked. “Where am I?”

"You are on the outskirts of Heaven, Tom," Harry said. "Your body is dead, but your soul still lingers. It is time for you to rest. We are here to help you cross over into the Summerland."

Voldemort let his gaze rest on Harry. "How very kind of you," he said, his voice dripping with sarcasm. "However, I do not wish to cross over into your Summerland, Elf."

"You do not have a choice," Harry told him. "You are no longer in the Human Realm. You are in the Realm of Light on the threshold of the Summerland. You cannot turn back. You must cross the river or be destroyed."

"You brought me here," he said. "And you will leave again. If you can leave this Realm, then so can I."

Harry shook his head. "Your body is dead and only your soul remains. Only those with living bodies can cross back over the bridge and leave this Realm. We have performed the funeral ritual and carried your soul where it belongs. We have reunited the pieces of your soul. You can never leave this Realm. You must cross the river, Tom."

"I will not cross the river! If I can't leave, I'll stay on this island."

"You cannot stay on the island, but you can come back after you have crossed the river."

"I do not believe you! This is a trap! You are trying to make me destroy myself!"

"Cross the river or be destroyed, Tom."

"I am a soul. How can you destroy me? Do you plan on using your sword?"

"Yes, but not the way you think. This sword has been touched by El. El is Light. It will destroy all that is not Light."

"So, you plan to stab me with your sword?"

Harry moved his sword to the side and a bolt of lightening came out of the tip and hit the ground near the Dark Lord. Voldemort jumped away from where it had struck the ground.

"I do not need to stab you," Harry said.

Voldemort looked down at the circle of herbs. His gaze followed it to the path leading to the river. "What happens if I step into the river?" he asked.

"All that is not light will be destroyed. Is there any light in you, Tom? Has your entire soul become dark?"

Voldemort looked at him. "I don't know. I don't think there is any light in me."

"Perhaps that young part of your soul that was once Tom Riddle still bears some light--the piece that you placed in the diary."

Voldemort frowned thoughtfully, then shook his head. "I don't know. Perhaps. I'm not sure there was ever any light in me."

"There was light in you when you were born, Tom—when you were a child. Do you remember ever feeling love? Have you ever loved anyone or anything? Have you ever felt pity or mercy?"

Voldemort shook his head. "Never."

"You have been loved," said a woman in the crowd. She stepped forward, and Harry saw that it was one of the souls from the Summerland. "For nine months, I carried you in my body, and I loved you with all of my heart."

Voldemort looked at the woman. "You are my mother?"

She nodded. "I am."

"Do you know that I killed my father?"

She nodded. "I do."

"And you are forgiven," said a man stepping out of the crowd. "I am your father, and I wronged you and your mother. I am sorry for what I did, and I forgive you for what you did."

Voldemort looked at him without emotion. "I do not want your forgiveness," he said. "I am not sorry for what I did."

"But you have it anyway," his father said. "Without asking for it or desiring it."

"That doesn't mean anything to me. You lived in a mansion while I starved in an orphanage. I do not forgive you." He turned to his mother. "And I do not forgive you for leaving me in that place."

"I forgive you, too," Lily Potter said, stepping out of the crowd. "I forgive you because the things that matter in the Human Realm do not matter in the Summerland. Everyone suffers, Tom, and we all must die. When or how or why or who no longer matter when you live forever in peace and love and joy, when you know that one day you'll be reunited with all those you love. If there is any light in you, Tom Riddle, find that light now. That is what will cross over. Your hatred, your lack of forgiveness, your darkness, the wrongs you have done in your life will be destroyed in the River of Purification."

"But that is all I have!" he cried. "I have nothing left but hatred and darkness! If I cross the river, there will be nothing left! Everything I am will be destroyed!" He turned to Harry. "Destroy me with your sword. I do not wish to cross the river."

Harry lowered the tip of his sword. "I believe there is still some light in you, Tom, hidden deep within your soul. Your soul has been separated since you were a child of 17. I believe that the young Tom Riddle may have some light left. Cross the river, Tom. Allow your mother and father to cross with you. If you are to be destroyed, at least have the courage to do it while crossing the river."

Voldemort looked down the path that led to the river. The children moved out of the crowd and stood on either side of the path and began to sing:

Rejoice, Children of Light

For in the Realm of El

All darkness shall be erased

Our brother will have a new body

He shall enter the Summerland.

Laugh, Children of El

For in the Summerland

Our brother will live forever

Our brother will be with his people

Our brother will live in joy.

Fear not, Child of Man

You shall live in peace

You shall live in joy

You shall live in love

Forever in the Summerland

Voldemort hesitated, watching the children who were singing. His parents waited for him outside the path. Harry went to him. "Come, I will walk with you, Tom."

Slowly, they started walking down the path toward the river, Tom and Harry inside the herbs and Tom's parents outside. The children continued to sing. Soon, the other Elves picked up the song and began to follow them down the path.

At the edge of the river, Tom hesitated and looked at Harry. "I am afraid," he said softly.

Harry nodded. "I know. But your parents will be with you. They will keep you safe."

Tom nodded and stepped into the river. His mother took his right hand and his father took his left and they waded out into the water.

The End